REAL GENIUS

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July 25, 1984

A BRIAN GRAZER PRODUCTION

FADE UP:

EXT. MANY THOUSANDS OF MILES FROM EARTH

The light of millions of stars FILL THE SCREEN, twinkling silently in the endless reaches of deep space.

A spacecraft ENTERS FRAME with United States Air Force markings. It's a sleeker, smaller version of the space shuttle.

ANGLE

The earth appears as a small speck beneath the craft as it silently makes its way over the eastern part of the North American continent.

INT. SPACECRAFT

In his cramped cockpit, the PILOT is flipping switches and checking readout information, and exchanging data with MISSION CONTROL back on earth. After a few beats:

MISSION CONTROL
Avenger, adjust for target run.

PILOT
Roger, mission control.

He gradually pulls the joystick to the left.

EXT. SPACE

The spacecraft banks and is heading toward the earth and its target below, the Soviet Union.

INT. SPACECRAFT

MISSION CONTROL
Lock onto target.

The Pilot hits a switch.

PILOT
Target locked in.

MISSION CONTROL
Ready laser.

The Pilot flips a red switch marked "laser."

PILOT
Laser ready.

ANGLE - DIGITAL READOUT

The numbers correspond to the countdown.

MISSION CONTROL
Ready to fire in five... four... three...

ANGLE

Pilot flips a red cover on his joystick, revealing a button.

MISSION CONTROL
Two... one... fire!

QUICK CUTS

DIGITAL READOUT -- in bold red letters -- "FIRE"!

JOYSTICK -- the Pilot presses the button.

EXT. SPACECRAFT

A bright, glowing beam emits from the nose of the craft, heading to the earth below.

A squadron of MIG fighters move swiftly through the sky. Suddenly the laser ray cuts through the clouds and instantly destroys the Soviet bombers. Blowing them to smithereens.

INT. PENTAGON VIEWING ROOM - DAY

Watching a big screen television is GENERAL DECKER, a career Air Force man, a no-nonsense, all-business kind of guy. The explosions on the screen light up his face in this darkened room.

ANGLE

Seated next to him, and anxiously watching for any reaction from the General, is DON CARMICHAEL, a plump, balding man in his 50's, a chain smoker who's constantly fidgeting, straightening his coat, and has the habit of stretching his neck in a nervous twitch. A salesman who is constantly selling.

ANGLE

The destruction of the Soviet MIGS and a nearby airbase continues on the screen with DEAFENING EXPLOSIONS and bright flashes of fire.

DECKER
(he's seen enough)
Okay.

Carmichael shoots to his feet and switches off the video player.

CARMICHAEL
Well, what do you think, General? Isn't that just the finest little piece of...

DECKER
(annoyed)
I think it's a movie. It's a goddam movie, that's what I think.

CARMICHAEL
(nervous)
Yes, but we thought it would help you get the feel of what this laser will do. We --

DECKER
(cutting him off)
Hey. If I was going to be impressed by movies, I'd buy all my weapons from George Lucas.
(softening)
It's an impressive piece of equipment, though.
(to another officer)
What did you think of what you saw, Dunlap?

DUNLAP
There weren't enough girls.

Decker stares at him. Dunlap moves down a seat.

DECKER
How close are you?

CARMICHAEL
Close.

DECKER
(pressing)
How close?

CONTINUED:

CARMICHAEL
Atherton says soon.

DECKER
Stay on him. This will give us the edge we need. I want it.

PUSH IN on Decker's face... It's easy to see from the glare in his eyes this is a man who will stop at nothing to get what he wants.

INT. EXHIBITION HALL - DAY

We OPEN on a sign: "Effects of Marijuana on Rodents." A cage is divided in half. One side is marked "No marijuana." A chinchilla is running furiously on a treadmill. The other side is marked "Marijuana." A chinchilla is lying in a little hammock.

DOLLY BACK TO a WIDE SHOT. We see we are in a large exhibition hall. There are dozens of booths and exhibits. A banner strung across the hall says: "WESTERN STATES REGIONAL SCIENCE FAIR."

ANGLE IN ANOTHER PART OF THE HALL

A female student in a different booth has hooked up vacuum hoses to a clear glass cylinder. Inside we can see swirling colored gases. A sign behind her reads: "HOW TORNADOS ARE FORMED." A small group of students stands watching her.

ANGLE IN ANOTHER PART OF THE HALL

Two blond-haired male twins stand proudly in their booth: "THE GRAVITIONAL PULL OF HEAVENLY BODIES." A large, crudely-painted diorama of the Milky Way is in the background. Several painted balls are suspended in front, labeled "Sun," "Mercury," "Venus," etc. The Earth is represented by a large electro-magnet. All the "planets" rotate around the magnet.

ANGLE AT EXHIBITION BOOTH NEAR ENTRANCE

A large metal ROBOT with a video readout screen for a face sits near the main entrance of the exhibition hall. The video on the Robot's face says, "Hi, my name is Harry. Let me guess your weight and age." With jerky motions, he extends his mechanical arms and shakes hands with passersby.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

We PAN OVER TO the door just as DR. JERRY ATHERTON, head of the physics department at Cal Tech, strides into the room. One quick look at Atherton tells you that this is a man without a sense of humor.

Serious, determined, intense, Atherton has no time for laughs. He's middle-aged, yet youthful; seeming sincere, yet manipulative; kind of the Jerry Brown of the research lab. The other quality he shares with California's former governor is frigidity. Atherton is as cold as freon at minus thirty degrees centrigrade. Atherton walks down one of the aisles to where a large crowd is gathererd. He makes his way through the crowd. Several people look at him the way fans would at a celebrity. An OLD LADY stops him. He beams a smile at her.

OLD LADY
Dr. Atherton, I saw your series on PBS... it was brilliant.

ATHERTON
Yes.

As fast as the smile appeared it disappears. He moves to a large demonstration table. Unlike some of the other exhibits we've seen, there is nothing amateurish about it. In fact, it's an impressive display of a dye laser. We can see the beams of multi-colored rays bouncing off mirrors, moving through liquids, combining with gases.

ANGLE - ATHERTON

An official leads him to the slightly-built, baby-faced young man who is at the controls of the lasers. This is MITCH SIMON, aged 15. Mitch is a genius. He's known that as long as he's understood the word (since he was a year and a half). He was doing college-level work by the time he was in the fourth grade. Although he's intellectually precocious, he's still only 15 years old, with all the problems of any average adolescent. His shyness and intellect have always made him feel "different" and uncomfortable in social situations.

Mitch's dominating PARENTS stand behind him as Atherton approaches.

ATHERTON
Good to see you again, Mrs. Simon... Mr. Simon. Hello, Mitch.

MITCH
(shyly)
Hi.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ATHERTON
(pointing to Mitch's laser)
What's your dyeing agent?

MITCH
(without taking a breath)
4, 4-di (4-anilino-6-methoxythiazinyl) -2, 2-stilbene disulfulnic acid dissolved in methanol.

ATHERTON
(impressed)
Quite ingenius use of the ultra-violet pump...

MITCH
(a kid again)
Thanks.

Atherton turns to Mitch's parents.

ATHERTON
You must be very proud. Mitch is the youngest student we've ever accepted at Cal-Tech.

MR. SIMON
It's a full scholarship right?

ATHERTON
Certainly.

MR. SIMON
Then we're proud.

MRS. SIMON
(almost in tears)
Fifteen years old and off to college...

MR. SIMON
Does he get a car?

ATHERTON
Well, no... but by allowing Mitch to progress at an accelerated rate we give him the opportunity to fulfill a far greater portion of his remarkable intellectual potential. I'm sure you agree.

MR. SIMON
Sure. Is there a snack bar in here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ATHERTON
I'm sure you agree, Mrs. Simon.

MRS. SIMON
We only want the best for Mitchie. You know, Dr. Atherton, I watch your show on PBS every week and I love it. I saw your show on radioactive isotopes and I just have one question. Is that your real hair?

MR. SIMON
Yeah, I wondered that.

ATHERTON
Yes... Uh... by any chance, is Mitch adopted?

MR. SIMON
No.

ATHERTON
Amazing.

MR. SIMON
I gotta get something to eat or I'm gonna die.

MRS. SIMON
Come on, let's look for something.

They start away. We FOLLOW them.

MRS. SIMON
(continuing)
I saw over there one of the kids was doing an experiment with wheat.

MR. SIMON
Was he doing anything with corned beef?

They exit as we HOLD for a moment on Harry the Robot. He is speaking to a small kid.

HARRY
Hi, my name is Harry. Let me guess your weight and age... Midget mutant; weight...

The kid shoots it in the neck with a toy space gun. The ROBOT SHORT-CIRCUITS; sparks shoot out, its arms fly in circles until a FUSE BLOWS and it SIZZLES to a burning stop.

ANGLE BACK ON MITCH AND ATHERTON

ATHERTON
Your parents...

MITCH
Yes?

ATHERTON
You never turned your laser on them, did you?

MITCH
No, why?

ATHERTON
Nothing. I bet you're excited about being accepted.

MITCH
I guess.

ATHERTON
What's the matter? Afraid you're going to miss your little high school friends?

MITCH
No. I don't have any. I intimidate all the other kids.

ATHERTON
Good boy.

MITCH
I don't want to.

ATHERTON
Oh. Well, those days are over. When you get to Cal Tech, I'm putting you on my personal research time.

MITCH
(scared)
Really.

ATHERTON
You'll be only the second freshman to whom I've ever given that honor. The first was --

MITCH
(in awe)
Chris Kinsley.

ATHERTON
You know Chris?

CONTINUED:

MITCH
No. But he's a legend in the Physics Club.

ATHERTON
Well, you'll get to meet him. Chris is a senior now. That boy is a real genius.

INT. PACIFIC ELECTRONICS INSTRUMENTS - DAY

We see CHRIS KINSLEY. Chris has on his head a pair of those jiggling antennae-like things. We PULL BACK to reveal that he is on a tour of the facilities.

A huge hangar-like room filled with workers constructing and assembling scientific instruments. Unlike the rather amateurish devices at the Science Fair, this has the look and feel of the Big Time.

ANGLE - THE ROOM

Workers put the finishing touches on a communicaton satellite, a wind tunnel tests an aircraft model, a bank of computers churn out data at lightning speed. Passing through this Disneyland of Science is a well-dressed executive, ROBERT JENSEN, and a Cal Tech senior, Chris Kinsley. Chris was heralded as one of the smartest kids to enter the university. He proved to be even smarter than some of the professors. He's also one of the most outrageous. His antics are legend. He's unimpressed with authority, pomposity, and bullshit in general. Chris dresses on the sloppy side of life. Currently he's wearing a sports jacket that's seen better days, over a faded sweatshirt. Printed on the sweatshirt is "II ♡ Toxic Waste!" Jensen is in the midst of giving Chris the royal tour.

JENSEN
You belong here at PEI, Chris. We have several of Dr. Atherton's former students from Cal Tech. They are all doing quite well with us. Uh, could you, uh...

CHRIS
Sure.

He takes the thing off his head.

CHRIS
(continuing)
I only wore it because it came with the suit. Or was it the other way around?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENSEN
(confused)
Yes. You are Chris Kinsley?

CHRIS
I didn't know there were gonna be questions. I would've studied.

JENSEN
(relieved)
Oh, I see. You're being funny.

Jensen emits one quick laugh.

CHRIS
Feeling better now?

Another recruiter, DODD, approaches. With him is a woman, SHERRY. She's very good-looking.

JENSEN
Chris, I'd like you to meet Mike Dodd. He's the man who designed the new Telcom Satellite.

CHRIS
Is that the one that's raining debris all over Europe?

DODD
(defensive)
That was a launch problem, not a design problem.

JENSEN
Anything we build at PEI works.

CHRIS
(points to Sherry)
Did you build her?

JENSEN
No.

CHRIS
Well, you see, that's the kind of work you should be doing? Hi, I'm Chris Kinsley.

SHERRY
I know. I'm Sherry Nugil.

JENSEN
Sherry's in Research.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRIS
No, she's not. She's right here.

Sherry laughs.

JENSEN
You are Chris Kinsley?

SHERRY
You gentlemen are busy, I'll be glad to show Mr. Kinsley around.

JENSEN
(relieved)
Thank you, Sherry. Take good care of this young man. He has one of the ten finest minds in America. So long, Chris.

CHRIS
(wiggles his fingers beneath his chin)
So long.

Jensen and Dodd exit.

SHERRY
Anything specific you'd like to know?

CHRIS
Yeah. Would you like to have my children? 'Cause, Lord knows, I don't want 'em.

She laughs.

SHERRY
You don't act like one of the top ten minds in America.

CHRIS
Oh really? How many of them have you met?

SHERRY
Seven.

CHRIS
(surprised)
Seven?

SHERRY
You'll make eight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRIS
What do you mean I'll make eight? You're meeting me right now.

SHERRY
(sexy)
Not like I met the other seven.

Chris is stunned.

CHRIS
You mean you've... had docking maneuvers with --

SHERRY
Seven of the top ten measured I.Q.'s among American men. The last was Professor Hostetler at M.I.T.

CHRIS
Old Professor Hostetler? He's dead.

SHERRY
He is now.

CHRIS
Why.

SHERRY
Some women like athletes. Some like wealth. I like men who are incredibly...

CHRIS
What?

SHERRY
Smart.

CHRIS
Oh, yeah.
(starts tapping his head, excitedly)
Thanks, boys. I owe you one.
(to Sherry)
Where do we --

SHERRY
I know just the place.

INT. ANOTHER HANGAR

A huge radio telescope is in the middle of the room, its giant dish facing the heavens.

ANGLE - CHRIS AND SHERRY

They are lying in the middle of the dish. He kisses her. He's very excited, but she doesn't seem to be.

SHERRY
(urgently)
Talk smart to me.

CHRIS
Huh?

SHERRY
Talk smart. I need it.

CHRIS
Uh... uh...

SHERRY
(urgent)
What courses are you taking?

CHRIS
Molecular biology...

SHERRY
Ooh...

She pulls off her blouse.

CHRIS
High energy physics.

SHERRY
(building)
Ooh.

She pulls off her skirt. Chris is undressing wildly at the same time.

CHRIS
Laser technology.

SHERRY
Oh, God.

She jumps on him.

CHRIS
Fluid mechanics and jet propulsion.

SHERRY
Take me, you animal.

INT. SATELLITE DISH - AN HOUR LATER

Sherry is finishing getting dressed. Chris is lying there, exhausted with his head toy on crooked, front to back.

SHERRY
Well... if you're still in the top ten next year, we can do it again.

CHRIS
Great. That's about when I should be getting the feeling back in my legs.

EXT. CAL TECH CAMPUS - WIDE SHOT - DAY

It is an impressive campus of older California Spanish buildings mixed eclectically with modern architectural marvels. We see beautiful SHOTS of various buildings, labs, experiments, telescopes, atom smashers, etc.

We hear the voice of Dr. Eugene Meredith, Chancellor of Cal Tech, welcoming incoming freshmen.

MEREDITH (V.O.)
Welcome to California Institute of Technology, one of the finest scientific institutions in the world. Here you will be working with nobel laureates, with men and women who are honored and acclaimed throughout the world for their work in a wide field of scientific endeavors. You will have the opportunity to participate in a pure scientific environment, where research is being done that will result in enormous benefits for all mankind. Research which will lead to antibodies for cancer; in behavioral biology for vision; recombinative dna applicable, for example to wheat, which would grow like crabgrass and withstand all weather conditions, allowing us to wipe hunger from the face of the earth; genetic manufacturing for the regrowth of limbs; lasers which will be used in medicine, surgery and the creation of synthetic materials.

INT. AUDITORIUM - WIDE SHOT - DAY

DR. MEREDITH, a distinguished-looking educator, is standing at a podium in front of the full auditorium. We PAN the anxious faces of the new freshmen in the audience. Somewhere in the middle is Mitch.

(CONTINUED)

EXT. BACKYARD-DAY

This is the home of Dr. Eugene Meredith, Chancellor of Cal Tech. A couple dozen eighteen and nineteen year olds are seated around. Mitch is among them.

DR. MEREDITH
Good Afternoon. All of you, except Mr. Simon have how been at Cal Tech for one semester. Look around you. Look at yourselves. Why have I invited only this small group to my home today? What is it you all have in common?

CORNELL
We don't eat much?

DR. MEREDITH
Wrong. You're all brilliant. And you're all struggling to maintain a "C" average.

They all look sheepish.

DR. MEREDITH
You're all used to being the smartest kids in school. But here at Cal Tech, you're fighting to keep up. Mitch, I wanted you here so you'd know what a Cal Tech freshman is up against.

Mitch is definitely intimidated.

CONTINUED:

He is shifting around in his seat, trying to see over the much taller kids sitting all around him. Besides being short, he stands out because he's the only kid wearing a tie and jacket.

MEREDITH
Academically, Cal Tech has been called the toughest school in the United States, but don't let that worry you--you have passed our high standards and were accepted here. You all have the ability to do the work.

CLOSE ON MITCH

He looks around with the insecure realization that all the other kids are a year or two older than he is. The other students are beginning to stare at him and point.

DR. MEREDITH
Now it's lunch time, so why don't we all go home.

EXT. CAL TECH CAMPUS-DAY

Mitch is walking through campus searching for something. He asks an upper classman a question and the other student points to a building right in front of him. Mitch crosses toward the building. He passes a bust of one of Cal Tech's founding fathers, "DR. MILIKEN". Students have put a party hat on Miliken's head, giving it a far from dignified look.

INT. APPLIED SCIENCES BUILDING- DAY

Mitch walks down a long corridor. He passes several open doors. Inside we can see labs with massive scientific equipment. Mitch looks dwarfed by the enormity of it all. He is carrying a bag of books.

Mitch stops in front of a door. It says "Cosmic Ray Laboratory". Softly, Mitch knocks.

VOICE
Yes?

MITCH
Uh...uh..I'm supposed to--

VOICE
(impatient)
Come in.

Mitch enters.

INT. LAB - DAY

Three seniors are present; KENT, CARTER and BODIE. They are working on impressive equipment as Mitch enters, hesitantly.

KENT
Oh, for God sakes. Carter, you horse's testicles, you inverted the last two steps. It'll be a full day just getting back to where we were.

CARTER
Oh, God. Please, don't tell Atherton I did it.

KENT
Well --
(sees Mitch)
Is that our lunch?

MITCH
(confused)
Lunch...

KENT
What are you standing there for?

MITCH
I'm --

KENT
Hey, Yoda, leave the sandwiches and get the hell out of here.

MITCH
(very nervous)
I didn't... I don't have any --

KENT
Brains?

MITCH
No sandwiches.

BODIE
(looks in bag)
Books? How do you expect us to eat books?

KENT
Are you from the restaurant or not?

MITCH
No. I'm Mitch Simon. I'm a student.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MITCH (CONT'D)
Dr. Atherton said I should come up here and meet you guys so you could bring me up to date on the work.

They stare at him and at each other.

MITCH
Sorry.

KENT
Oh, you're the new stud.

MITCH
(embarrassed)
Stud?

KENT
Stud. Hot shot. Brain. You're the twelve-year-old right?

MITCH
I'm fifteen.

KENT
(looking down at him)
Does your body know that?

Mitch attempts a good-natured laugh.

MITCH
Will Dr. Atherton be here soon?

KENT
Sure. Can I get you something? A balloon?

MITCH
Are any of you guys Chris Kinsley?

They all freeze.

KENT
No. Thank God.

BODIE
Hey, Kent. Did you hear? Kinsley is getting the PEI job.

KENT
Damn! I wanted that job.

MITCH
Are they doing particularly interesting work at PEI?

CONTINUED:

KENT
Interesting? That job starts at fifty thousand a year. Starts. Plus travel, company car, stock options. It's not fair. I've done everything Atherton's asked of me. And he recommends Kinsley for PEI. Well, I'm not afraid to say it. Dr. Atherton is a bucket of steaming -- Good morning, Dr. Atherton.

Atherton has indeed entered.

ATHERTON
Gentlemen, Mitch, are they treating you right?

MITCH
Yes, sir.

ATHERTON
Good, good.
(quick look)
Kent! What happened here? Did someone invert a step?

KENT
Uh... yes, sir.

ATHERTON
Who?

KENT
I'd rather not say.

Kent takes a step back so he is behind Carter, then gestures furiously in Carter's direction.

ATHERTON
Where's Chris?

KENT
(eager)
He didn't bother to come in today.

ATHERTON
(annoyed)
Well... he does his best work on his own.

Kent is disappointed that Chris isn't in trouble.

ATHERTON
Well, after Mitch is brought up to date, I want the rest of you to take your cues from him. He'll be in charge of the group.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KENT
What? I mean, good choice, sir.

ATHERTON
Remember, when this laser is completed it will improve surgical techniques enormously -- We'll be saving many, many lives.

KENT
Yeah, that's... good.

ATHERTON
Carry on.

He exits.

The other three walk threateningly towards Mitch.

CARTER
So you're going to tell us what to do.

Mitch is nervous.

KENT
I got news for you. Thumbelina. I think you're going to be very unhappy as Cal Tech.

MITCH
Listen, whatever you do to me, it can't be as bad as what they did to me in high school. They jammed me in a mailbox.
(realizes what he's done)
I had to tell them.

INT. ATHERTON'S OFFICE - DAY

Atherton enters his office.

ATHERTON
What are you doing here?

ANGLE ON CARMICHAEL

CARMICHAEL
General Decker wants to know when the laser system will be ready.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ATHERTON
It's been going slowly. But I found a new genius. This kid's got the most natural feel for lasers I've ever seen.

CARMICHAEL
He doesn't know that --

ATHERTON
Of course not. He thinks he's working on a surgical laser. That's what they all think.

EXT. RICKETS HALL - DAY

Mitch enters the arched column portico of the building.

INT. RICKETS HALL - DAY

Mitch walks down the empty hall and he finds his room. He puts in his key and opens the door. It's like nothing he's ever seen before.

ANGLE

The room is small, cramped, and more than a little disheveled. Pacific Electronic Instruments posters and brochures hang on the ceiling and wall, over, and around one bed. Junk food and soft drink cans are littered everywhere. In one corner is a fully stocked Frito Lay Potato Chip display, the wire kind found in any grocery. On a wall is a Cal Tech pennant, tacked next to it is a pair of women's bikini underwear.

Mitch crosses to his luggage. He opens a bag and, to his surprise, finds it empty. He then looks in the others and finds they've all been cleaned out. Puzzled, he shuts the bags.

Suddenly the door swings open and Chris Kinsley, who we saw earlier at PEI, enters. He's dragging a large piece of mechanical equipment. It is, in fact, a baseball pitching machine.

CHRIS
Hi.

Mitch stares.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRIS
(continuing)
Hey, you just gonna sit there admiring the room or are you going to help me with this?

MITCH
What is this thing?

CHRIS
It's a penis stretcher. You want to try it out?

MITCH
No!

CHRIS
Oh really? Well, congratulations, then. No, it's an Iron Mike.

MITCH
What?

CHRIS
A baseball pitching machine.

Chris is setting it up.

MITCH
I was here for a second this morning --

CHRIS
(frightened)
You didn't straighten the place up did you?

MITCH
(looks around at the mess)
No.

CHRIS
Good. 'Cause all my filth's in alphabetical order.

Chris puts on a baseball cap and grabs a bat.

MITCH
Anyway, I dropped off my luggage and now all my bags are empty.

A ball is pitched. Chris connects and the ball smashes through the window.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRIS
I put your stuff away for you.

Another pitch. He smashes a ball into a wall.

CHRIS
(continuing)
It's all in the bottom drawer. Shirts, pants, underwear, shoes. I had a little trouble with your sport jacket, so I threw it out. Nah, only kidding. This one's for you little Johnny.

He whacks another pitch. He does a crowd cheer and circles the bases. He slides headfirst into the bathroom. We hear the toilet flush. He comes out, drying his hair.

CHRIS
What a game. I'm Chris Kinsley.

MITCH
Aw, no.

INT. MITCH'S ROOM- NIGHT

Mitch is gathering up some books. He looks at a chart on the wall.

MITCH
Library..library..205.

The door to the room opens while Mitch is looking the other way. We catch a glimpse of a tall bulkily built man opening Mith's closet door and disappearing inside. Mitch turns just in time to see the door close. He goes to it, opens it and looks inside. Nothing. He goes to the door of his room. Mitch opens the door, steps into the hall and slips, landing on his ass. His books go flying.

INT. HALLWAY

The hall floor is covered with ice wall-to-wall. Skating MUSIC--"Sleigh Ride"-- is playing on a cassette. A few students, dressed for winter are skating. Chris comes over.

CHRIS
Welcome to Cal Tech's "Smart People On Ice."

He leaps from wall to wall, sliding quickly down the ice. He stops in front of a short roly-poly, Buddha-looking kid of Japanese descent, MARK ICKAGAMI, better know as ICK. Ick is a clever engineering student who someday will build bridges. Right now he spends a lot of time in the chem lab making hallucinogens and sampling each batch. Maybe that's why his eyes are always half-shut, like he just woke up.

CONTINUED:

CHRIS
(continuing; to Ick)
Ice turned out good.

ICK
Yeah. I used a negative isotope process, man. I flooded the hall with water, then I supercharged it with freon.

CHRIS
You going to skate?

ICK
(ridiculous)
No! I gotta study.

CHRIS
(to Mitch)
He's studying to be Japanese.
(yells)
Come on, nobody's skating.

STUDENT
We all got work to do.

CHRIS
Moles and trolls.

MITCH
Hm?

CHRIS
Moles and trolls. Work, work, work. I planned this for weeks and all they want to do is study. I'm discouraged. We had nobody at the mutant hamster races -- you couldn't get a bet down -- one entry in the Madame Curie look-alike contest and three people at the zero-gravity orgy. Why do I bother?
(yells)
Come on, skate! Later I'm gonna get cherry syrup and make a giant Slushee.

Chris skates off.

MITCH
(to Ick)
How does he do it?

ICK
Well, I'm not an expert, but I think he puts one foot in front of the other and pushes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MITCH
Not the skating. The horsing around. The never studying. I mean I know he's smart, but nobody's that smart.

ICK
Well, he is a genius. Before even starting at Cal Tech, he initiated the research which evolved into a cogenerative power system which provides the energy for Salt Lake City at half the cost, and other stuff like that. But this year... it's the big campus mystery... nothing... and he still pulls the grades. No one knows how.

Just then, ROARING down the hall face-down on a sled, comes JORDAN COCHRAN. She's an advanced mathematics major who can never seem to shut off her constantly-computing mind. She has the high-pitched energy of a hyper-kinetic kindergarten class.

CHRIS
Very professional landing.

Jordan jumps up. She talks a mile-a-minute.

JORDAN
Okay, I see the problem. Drag coefficient. I'll go back to my room and redesign it. First I have to eat dinner, do my laundry and put up new wallpaper. I'll be back in an hour.
(to Mitch)
What's your name?

MITCH
Mi--

JORDAN
(to Chris)
Why does he talk so slow? See you.

She skates off.

MITCH
What was that?

CHRIS
That was Jordan. She's got a little hyperenergy problem.

MITCH
She looks young.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRIS
Seventeen and rumor has it never been kissed. No wonder. If you want to talk to her you have to pin her to the bulletin board.

Jordan rushes back.

JORDAN
(to Chris)
Oh. Here's that sweater I made you this morning.
(to Mitch)
You want a sweater?

MITCH
Gee, I --

JORDAN
What size?

MITCH
I'm a men's small or a boy's large.

JORDAN
You have a bed?

MITCH
(excited)
Yes, I do.

JORDAN
Oh. I was gonna make you one.

She races off. She passes Kent as she goes.

KENT
What on earth is all this?

CHRIS
It's ice, you asshole.

The others laugh.

KENT
As house president, I am demanding you remove this ice from the hallway!

CHRIS
Aw! Kent, we were going to name you King of the Winter Carnival.

KENT
(half-believing)
You were not.

CONTINUED:

CHRIS
No, but we're going to name you Geek of the Winter Carnival.
(calls out)
Who's got the chicken?

KENT
I'm going to report you.
(loud)
And I'm reporting anyone else I see participating in this nonsense.

The others consider this and all go out on the ice to spite Kent.

KENT
(continuing)
Okay, you're all in trouble.

CHRIS
(quietly)
Kent if you say anything, I'll tell about the time I caught you naked with that bowl of Jello.

KENT
(flustered)
I... you... I was hot and I was hungry.
(to Mitch)
What are you smirking at?

Mitch stops smirking.

CHRIS
Hey, pick on someone your own perversion.

KENT
(to Chris)
Oh, I, see. If you can't be number one anymore, you'll be his friend.

CHRIS
What?

KENT
(delighted)
Oh, don't you know. You no longer have the highest I.Q. in school. Mighty Mouse here beat your score. You weren't expecting that, huh. That'll teach you to fool with Kent Studnitzer.

Kent exits.

CONTINUED:

Chris looks at Mitch, strangely.

MITCH
That doesn't bother you... I mean about --

CHRIS
No. So you've got a higher I.Q., big deal. Can you do this?

Chris attempts to do a childish trick with his hands.

CHRIS
(continuing)
Wait a minute. I can't do this.
(yells in mock panic)
Hey somebody help me here I'm stuck.

Mitch laughs.

INT. MITCH AND CHRIS' ROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Morning light streams in through the window. CAMERA PANS TO Mitch. He is sleeping peacfully. We hear the SOUND OF THE DOOR OPENING, followed by some HEAVY FOOTSTEPS. Mitch's eyes pop open. It takes him a second to realize where he is. Then he sits up.

MITCH'S POV

We catch a glimpse of a tall, bulkily-built man opening Mitch's closet door. He is holding a bag which says "McDonalds." He quickly disappears inside the closet.

ANGLE - MITCH

To say the least, he's thrown by this strange intrusion.

MITCH
Hello?

He waits a beat, listening. Nothing happens, so he gets up and crosses to the closet, looks inside.

OVER MITCH'S SHOULDER INTO CLOSET

There's nothing in there but clothes. Mitch pushes the garments aside and finds just a wall.

ANGLE - MITCH

He shakes his head. Maybe he dreamed what he just saw. He opens the door to the bathroom, which is shared by the people in the room next door.

INT. BATHROOM

Mitch crosses to the urinal. Just as he is about to relieve himself he has a visitor, Jordan. This is an experience he's never had before; he's one uncomfortable 15-year-old. Jordan blitzes him with rapid dialogue.

JORDAN
I thought I saw you come in here. I'm Jordan, remember? Here's your sweater.

He leans close into the urinal, trying to hide himself the best he can.

JORDAN
Peeing?

MITCH
Yah.

JORDAN
If you ever need to talk or help studying at night, let me know. I'm a couple of doors down from you guys. I never sleep. Okay?

MITCH
Sure.

JORDAN
Are you done?

MITCH
I can't start.

JORDAN
See ya later. 'Bye.

She exits, leaving a bewildered Mitch.

INT. RICKETS HALLWAY

Mitch is again dressed in a tie and jacket, and is on his way out the door as he crosses past the self-serve vending machine area, and spots Chris entering the kitchen. Mitch follows him inside.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MITCH
Something strange happened to me last night.

CHRIS
(excited)
Yeah? You had that dream where you're in bed with Albert Einstein?

MITCH
No.

CHRIS
Why am I the only one who has that dream?

Before Mitch can ask another question, Chris opens the freezer compartment and takes out a long piece of copper tubing. He takes the tubing over to a cutting board and grabs a very sharp knife which has been soaking in hot water. He taps the back of the tube and pushes out a cylindrical mound of ice, then, using a calibrated ruler, he slices the ice very carefully into thin "coins." He tosses the tube back into the freezer and Mitch follows him back out to --

COFFEE HOUSE - VENDING MACHINE AREA

CHRIS
(to Mitch)
Coffee?

Mitch nods and Chris takes one of the ice "coins" and puts it into one of the machines. To Mitch's astonishment, the machine accepts this bogus money and a cup drops down, filling with coffee.

MITCH
(amazed)
That's great.

CHRIS
So what happened?

MITCH
Oh. A guy disappeared into our closet.

CHRIS
That's just Hopsfield.

Chris puts his "coins" in several of the machines, extracting from them a junk food junky's treasure trove of goodies.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MITCH
Who's Hopsfield?

CHRIS
He lives in the steam tunnel below our room. The entrance is in our closet.
(hands him candy bars)
Well, your first day. Good luck, son. Your mother and I are very proud of you.

He kisses Mitch on the cheek and walks off. Mitch takes a deep breath and heads out the door.

SCHOOL MONTAGE:

A) INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY
An older professor is lecturing, pointing to a complicated vector algebraic problem on a blackboard.

We PAN the multi-tiered classroom. Students are listening intently, taking notes. In the last row is Mitch. He thumbs quickly through a textbook, then closes it and makes a note in a looseleaf binder.

B) ATOM SMASHER ROOM
Mitch stands with a group of other students watching an instructor explain the intricacies of nuclear fission in front of a huge atom smasher. Mitch quickly opens a notebook and starts writing furiously.

C) WAVE TANK ROOM - CLOSE ON WAVES
rising and falling. PULL OUT to reveal the waves which have been mechanically produced in a huge tank. Mitch and other students watch as a female professor pours a blue liquid into the water. The blue coloring moves quickly through the water, spread by the waves.

D) INT. CHEMICAL ENGINEERING LAB
Mitch enters with other students. He reaches his seat and finds a Teddy bear there.

E) ANOTHER LAB
A monkey with an electrode sticking out of its head is sitting inside a cage watching a TV screen. He responds to images flashed to him by pushing buttons on a control panel. Mitch is standing outside the cage with other students, taking notes.

F) DINING ROOM
Mitch is carrying his food and looking for a place to sit. Kent points and Mitch sees a high-chair at the end of the table. He feels humiliated.

INT. ATHERTON'S LAB - DAY

Atherton walks around the room, watching his research assistants conduct different tests around the larger laser in the middle of the room. Kent is standing next to his friends, Bodie and Carter.

BODIE
Ready to flow...

CARTER
Valves are open.

KENT
Good. Simon, give me a reading on the cryogenic temperature.
(beat)
Let's go, mister. We're aging.

MITCH
I'm not getting anything.

KENT
Why not?

ANGLE

We see smoke pouring from the laser power lines.

MITCH
You turned the gauge down.

Everyone stops what they're doing.

MITCH
(continuing)
You're melting the xeon. It's evaporating.

ANGLE

ATHERTON
Shut it down!

Mitch snaps off the power.

ATHERTON
(continuing; disgusted at Kent)
You've just lost us at least a week here. All right, let's concentrate on our power source... Where were we, Bodie?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Kent's eyes are shooting daggers at Mitch.

BODIE
The coaxials are still not giving us increased pulses.

ATHERTON
Mitch, do you have any ideas?

All eyes turn to Mitch.

MITCH
Thyratron switches would help.

ATHERTON
Good idea... Do it.

Mitch goes about his work. Kent is angry at Mitch's constant success with Atherton.

ATHERTON
(continuing)
Kent, I want an update on that Aluminum coating.

This is Kent's turn to shine. He hands Atherton the report.

ATHERTON
(continuing)
Mitch.

He hands the report to Mitch, who looks it over.

KENT
He doesn't need to check that. I've already gone over those figures.

MITCH
Um... the figures are all wrong.

KENT
Where do you get off, runt?

ATHERTON
Kent!

KENT
(so polite)
Yes, sir.

ATHERTON
Why are they wrong?

CONTINUED:

MITCH
He's used the wrong constant.

ATHERTON
Correct it.
(scolding)
Kent, take your time. Check your work.

KENT
(humiliated)
Yes, sir.

ANGLE - ATHERTON

ATHERTON
(irritated)
Where's Kinsley?

KENT
(anxious to get
Chris in trouble)
I'll get him.

Kent goes to the window and looks down.

KENT
(continuing)
Kinsley... Dr. Atherton needs you now.

EXT. LAB - MED. CLOSE ON CHRIS - WAIST UP

He's sitting on a chaise lounge sipping a beer.

CHRIS
Be right up, sweetheart.

CAMERA WIDENS to reveal that the chaise lounge has large weather balloons tied to each corner. Chris dumps one of the sand bags which is on his lap and the chaise rises straight up in the air like a backyard dirigible.

ANGLE - ATHERTON AND CHRIS - FRAMED BY THE WINDOW

Chris hovers in mid-air.

ATHERTON
What are you doing out there?

CHRIS
Relaxing.

Atherton takes a beat, stifling his anger.

ANGLE - MITCH

He looks on amazed.

ANGLE - ATHERTON

ATHERTON
I want to see you at my house -- 6:00 sharp.

CHRIS
Sounds fun. Anything else?

Atherton gives Chris a dirty look.

CHRIS
(continuing)
Okay. Fine. Now, if you'll excuse me, there's millions of boys and girls waiting around the world for me to bring them their presents. Ho, ho, ho.

He releases another sandbag and floats from view.

INT. LAB

Atherton and Kent stand at the window watching Chris ascend.

KENT
(real prissy)
I don't know why you put up with him, sir.

ATHERTON
I won't much longer.

This pleases Kent a lot.

ANGLE - MITCH

He smiles, watching his roommate float off. Chris is the weirdest human being he's ever met.

EXT. ATHERTON'S HOUSE - DAY

Atherton's home sits on a couple of wooded acres in a remote part of the campus. A couple of workmen are on scaffolding, painting a side of the house, which is a Queen Anne Victorian. It's being immaculately restored, down to the last detail.

ANGLE - ATHERTON

He is seated on his front porch bench watching the workmen. He bends over and ties his running shoes. We can tell that when he goes out for a run he really dresses the part, decked out in an expensive jogging suit and appropriate accessories.

Chris comes up on the porch. He's definitely not dressed for jogging.

CHRIS
You wanted to see me, your joggingness?

Atherton stands up. He stretches his leg muscles.

ATHERTON
Let's get right to it. Chris, we had a deal and you're letting me down.

CHRIS
Hey, come on. I advanced that project more than any three guys on campus and you know it.

ATHERTON
(dropping the subject)
Do you run?

CHRIS
When chased, yes.

Atherton jogs down the front walk into the street. Chris jogs right alongside of him.

ATHERTON
I'd like to see more of you.

CHRIS
Well, I shower at six. That's your best bet.

ATHERTON
(cutting him off)
In the lab... I want you to team up with Mitch. He's probably the brightest kid we ever brought to Cal Tech.

CHRIS
Yeah, people keep telling me that.

ATHERTON
The two of you could probably solve the power source problem in no time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Chris turns away like he hasn't been listening and picks up the pace. Atherton stays in stride.

ATHERTON
(continuing; warning)
Look, I'm handing you Pacific Electronics, a cush position, and in exchange I expect you to start producing.

CHRIS
(putting him on)
Producing? No, I see myself more in directing. Yes, that's it, directing. Lights. Camera. Quiet on the set. We're rolling!

He jumps down in the grass and literally begins to roll down an incline away from Atherton. Atherton, at first, is amazed, then angry. He growls audibly.

EXT. CAL TECH CAMPUS - NIGHT

We PAN the deserted campus. We see the bust of D.R. Milliken. It's now wearing a pair of those bushy eyebrowed eye glasses with the big nose. As we CONTINUE TO PAN we see a thin blue light beaming from a building. We PUSH IN and --

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ATHERTON'S LAB - NIGHT

The blue light belongs to Atherton's laser. Mitch is in the lab.

He looks tired and upset. He tinkers around for awhile then goes back to his table and looks at his notes. Suddenly, he throws his notes off the table. The door opens and Chris enters with a mixing bowl and spoon.

CHRIS
Hi. Do me a favor taste this.

Mitch is confused.

CHRIS
(continuing)
Come on, you won't hurt my feelings.

MITCH
I --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Chris rams the spoon in his mouth.

CHRIS
Well? Too sweet?

Mitch makes a face.

MITCH
What is it?

CHRIS
Beats me. I just found it in one of the labs.

MITCH
Aggghh!

CHRIS
Come on. I'm just pulling your little leg. How are you doing?

MITCH
Terrible. I'm stuck. I promised Dr. Atherton I'd start making some progress

CHRIS
Let me at that for a while.

As Mitch talks. Chris aims the laser to the window and periodically checks on something with binoculars, then readjusts the direction of the laser.

MITCH
(brightening)
Oh, great. Dr. Atherton said you might be around more. I'm really worried. I think he expects too much of me. I mean everybody else thinks I can solve anything, but it's not that way. At least if you're here... What are you doing?

CHRIS
How do you like your steak?

MITCH
What?

INT. SUPERMARKET

The laser beam is trained on the meat counter.

CONTINUED:

Ick and Jordan enter, pushing shopping carts.

JORDAN
(feigning surprise)
Wow, how did that happen?

ENG
I don't know, but I'll bet it was those kids from Cal Tech. Last year, they magnetized the beer shelves and ten thousand cans went flying through the window and across the street.

ICK
I remember. I mean I heard.

JORDAN
That's awful. You'll never be able to sell that meat now. We'll take it off your hands.

ENG
Sure...you're not from Cal Tech, are you?

JORDAN
Us? Do we look like gensiuses?

ENG
No, you look like my kids. Here you go.

INT. ATHERTON'S LAB

Chris gives the binoculars to Mitch. Mitch looks.

CHRIS
We gotta increase the power of this thing. It's taking longer than I expected.

MITCH
You're using the state-of-the-art in laser technology to cook steaks?!

CHRIS
Yeah. You want to run down there and turn them over?

MITCH
No.

CHRIS
Sure, let me do all the work. I spend all day slaving over a hot laser so you can have a nice home-cooked meal and that's the thanks I get. My mother was right about you.

MITCH
You're insane.

CHRIS
I am not.

Chris reaches out, grabs an imaginary bug and eats it. Chris takes back the binoculars and looks.

CHRIS
(continuing)
Ah, just the way I like 'em.

INT. MARKET - NIGHT

We see the BUTCHER running to get the manager, who is okaying a check at a checkout stand.

BUTCHER
Mr. Eng, quick!

He grabs MR. ENG's arm and runs him to the meat counter.

ANGLE

Mr. Eng stares in amazement. All the meat -- every chicken, ham, steak, hamburger, and pieces of bacon -- is sizzling hot, cooked to order in their packages.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ick and Jordan enter, pushing shopping carts.

JORDAN
(feigning surprise)
Look at the meat, amazing!

ICK
Gee, too bad. You'll never be able to sell that meat now. We'll take it off your hands, Mister.

ENG
(bewildered)
Sure... go ahead.

Jordan and Ick start stuffing the meat into their carts.

INT. ATHERTON'S LAB

Chris laughs maniacally.

CHRIS
(manic)
Call me mad will you?!

Laughs again.

MITCH
Chris, it's late, I'm --

CHRIS
Wait I've got one more.

He laughs again.

CHRIS
(continuing)
Okay.

MITCH
It's late. I'm tired, and I'm not getting any work done.

CHRIS
(serious)
You know what you should do?

MITCH
(eager)
What?

CHRIS
Surf.

MITCH
(getting fed up)
Surf. Look, I have no intention of leaving this building.

CONTINUED:

CHRIS
Who said anything about leaving the building?

Mitch looks confused.

INT. WAVE TANK ROOM - NIGHT

The wave tank room has been turned into an indoor Malibu. There are about twenty attractive girls there. We've never seen these girls before. Several of them are "surfing" on the mechanically produced waves inside the tank. We PAN TO the "beach." On the sand area, surrounding the tank, there's a campfire going. Blankets have been laid out. Girls are sitting around on them, toasting marshmallows and talking. Nearby a picnic table is set up, banquet style, with Chris' "lasered" meats. ROCK MUSIC BLARES out of huge tower speakers. Some sunlamps have been set up on one corner of the "beach" and some of the kids are spreading suntan oil on and catching some rays.

ANGLE - DOORWAY

A lot of the guys we've seen around the dorm, including Mitch enter hesitantly. We hear Chris before we see him.

CHRIS (O.S.)
Come on! No one's gonna hurt you.

Chris enters, dressed for the beach. He's pushing the guys along with a surfboard.

CORNELL
(a nerdy student)
I have a test tomorrow in Geochemistry and I do not feel adequately prepared.

CHRIS
But the main thing is you look good.

CORNELL
Thanks.

MILTON
We've all got work to do. I have an Astrophysics class tomorrow and I don't wish to be chastised.

CHRIS
Look, Butch --

MILTON
Milton.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRIS
Milton, remember the words of the great physicist Enrico Fermi who said, "How do you spell "Fermi."

CORNELL
(noticing)
Are those girls?!

CHRIS
160 I.Q. and he just notices. Listen, Sport --

CORNELL
Cornell.

CHRIS
Cornell, wouldn't you like to meet some of these girls?

From the back someone GIGGLES.

CHRIS
(continuing)
Whoever giggled go upstairs.

MITCH
Who are these girls? They're not from Cal Tech are they?

CHRIS
Well... not exactly. But they're from a nearby college.

MITCH
What college?

CHRIS
The Wanda Trossler School of Beauty.

MITCH
They're beauticians?

CHRIS
Not yet.

CORNELL
I don't know...

CHRIS
Well, what you don't know, they might teach you. Let's get serious here. There are 670 guys at Cal Tech and 136 girls. --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CORNELL
A ratio of 4.93 to 1.

CHRIS
Good, Cornell. Of these 136 girls, most of them can find guys a lot better than you.

CORNELL
Oh, easily.

CHRIS
These girls are not used to geniuses. You might impress them.

CORNELL
I don't see how.

CHRIS
Let me put this another way. This might be the only chance you'll ever get in your entire lives to have sex.

Pause.

CHRIS
(continuing)
Let's go!

Chris runs and dives wildly into the tank. The other guys follow, whooping it up. Mitch hangs back.

ANGLE on various activities.

Surfing, dancing, a volleyball game. Most of the guys are making an effort to socialize.

ANGLE -- Milton talking to a GIRL.

VIVIAN
So, what do you guys do? Just be smart all the time?

MILTON
Well, yes. I, myself, am very interested in astrophysics.

VIVIAN
(impressed)
Oh! Let me ask you something about that. If I was on the moon -- you know, with different gravity -- could I like tease hair much higher.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MILTON
Theoretically.

VIVIAN
Wow! This is fascinating.

ANGLE on Cornell and a GIRL in the tank. They both bob up out of the water. Cornell still has his glasses on. He takes them off and can't see.

LOUISA
Why do you wear those glasses?

CORNELL
So I can see.

LOUISA
But you look very sexy without them.

Reflexively he crushes his glasses between his hands.

ANGLE on another guy (FENTON) and a girl (CONNIE).

CONNIE
Who are you?

FENTON
Fenton Beaudine.

CONNIE
I'm Connie Buscafusco.

FENTON
Sixteen letters.

CONNIE
What?

FENTON
Sixteen letters in your name. It's a thing I can do.

CONNIE
Fantastic.

FENTON
Nine.

CONNIE
God!

FENTON
Three.

ANGLE on Milton and Vivian. Milton is rubbing suntan oil on her back.

CONTINUED:

MILTON
I really should be studying.

VIVIAN
Me too. Tomorrow morning I have a hair final.

MILTON
Uh-ah.

VIVIAN
What?

MILTON
I just remembered. I'm allergic to suntan oil.

VIVIAN
Then maybe you better stop.

MILTON
(aroused)
I don't think I can. I haven't been this excited since I met Alan Shepherd.

ANGLE on Cornell and Louisa.

LOUISA
(very sexy)
You know, I read in the Enquirer that women are paying big money for the sperm of geniuses.

CORNELL
Yes, that's very true.

LOUISA
(putting her arms around him)
Do you think I could have some?

CORNELL
Sure. You have a cup?

ANGLE on Connie and Fenton. They're necking.

CONNIE
My friend Evelyn tells me that brilliant men are the best lovers.

FENTON
I'd say that's true.

CONNIE
Up 'til now, what's been your ultimate sexual experience?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FENTON
I once fell off a ladder and landed on my cousin Bernice.

ANGLE on Mitch.

The party is in full swing and most of the guys have become very comfortable. Mitch now seems like the only one left out. He sees a lot of guys and girls together, including some people making out. He is envious. He sees a pretty GIRL just coming out of the water. She adjusts her top. Mitch wanders over to her.

MITCH
(great effort)
Hi.

TAMMY
Hi.

MITCH
I was watching you... swim.

TAMMY
Great.

MITCH
I was thinking of going for a swim myself.

TAMMY
Oh yeah? Is that the kiddie pool.

She exits, leaving Mitch devastated. He goes and sits in a corner. Chris is looking around proudly. It's obvious he didn't see what happened to Mitch. He smiles at the fun everyone is having. A GIRL passes him. She's eating a hamburger.

CHRIS
Don't eat that.

KIMBERLY
Huh?

CHRIS
Don't you know that eating that can give you very large breasts.
(mock despair)
Oh, my God, I see I'm too late.

She laughs. He puts his arm around her and they walk off.

As Chris and Kimberly exit we catch a glimpse of a face in a window. We PUSH IN. It's Kent, spying. He's definitely a happy guy here. He can now do his favorite thing. Snitch.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

OPEN TIGHT on Atherton's face. He looks odd, as there are Kleenex tissues sticking out from his shirt collar around his neck. A hand comes INTO FRAME, holding pancake makeup puff, and starts applying it to his face.

ATHERTON
Don, I told you. We're moving along rapidly.

CARMICHAEL (O.S.)
Of course you are.

ATHERTON
You want miracles overnight. Nobody can give you that.

CAMERA PULLS OUT, revealing Atherton is sitting in front of a classroom set, talking to Carmichael. Technicians and cameramen are busily getting ready for taping.

CARMICHAEL
I know... hey, Rome wasn't built in a day. It's just that...

ATHERTON
(angrily, to make-up person)
The crows feet. Get rid of the crows feet.

CARMICHAEL
... the Air Force wants a demonstration soon. They're tossing a deadline at us.

He hushes up when he sees the STAGE MANAGER approaching.

STAGE MANAGER
Ready to go, Dr. Atherton.

He exits.

ATHERTON
You can tell Decker, pushing me doesn't help. It's your job to keep them off my back. Do it!

He walks away. There is definitely no love between them.

ATHERTON
(continuing; under his breath)
Son of a bitch.

CARMICHAEL
(under his breath)
Asshole.

ANGLE

Atherton walks over to the cue card man and checks through the cards.

Kent enters.

KENT
Dr. Atherton...

ATHERTON
(cutting him off)
Did you pick up my dry cleaning?

KENT
Yes, sir... there's something you should know.

ATHERTON
The gravy stain?

KENT
No, that came out.
(real pleased)
Chris and Mitch aren't working tonight. They're at a party.

Atherton begins to seethe.

ATHERTON
I want you to drive me back to school right after I'm through here.

KENT
(all smiles)
Yes, sir.

STAGE MANAGER
In five... four...

Kent forgets to move. Atherton shoves him off. We hear an off-stage CRASH.

STAGE MANAGER
(continuing)
... three... two... and...

We PUSH IN on a nearby monitor. The show's logo comes on, along with some theme MUSIC.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Welcome to "Science," with your host, Dr. Jerome Atherton, funded by...

A new card shows on monitor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
(continuing)
... a grant from Pacific Electronic Instruments. PEI. And now, Dr. Atherton.

Atherton appears on the monitor.

ANGLE - ATHERTON IN THE STUDIO

He smiles broadly and reads from the cue cards.

ATHERTON
Good evening... Tonight we're going to look at something most of us take for granted... oxygen. Did you ever wonder what it would be like if...

As Atherton talks, Kent wanders by in the background, dazed.

INT. WAVE TANK ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

The party is still going strong. Some of the kids are showing signs of the all-nighter, laid out on the beach, tired, drunk, or stoned.

ANGLE - JORDAN

still full of energy. She tosses the volleyball up into the air, in a one-woman game of catch.

Mitch approaches, forlornly.

JORDAN
Wanna play.

MITCH
I'm not very --

He gets smacked in the head with the ball.

MITCH
(continuing)
Sure, all right.

Through the following Mitch keeps serving and Jordan keeps spiking the ball down on him.

JORDAN
Some party, huh?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MITCH
I guess.
(hesitant)
How come you're...

JORDAN
Over here, playing volleyball instead of with guys.

MITCH
Well --

JORDAN
I'm not gay.

MITCH
(embarrassed)
I never... I wouldn't suggest --

JORDAN
Look, I'm seventeen, I'm brilliant, and I'm hyperkinetic. Guys are a little afraid of me, you know. It'll pass... I guess.

ANGLE on Mitch.

MITCH
(softly)
I think you're very nice.

He gets smashed with the ball, sending his glasses flying.

WAVE TANK ENTRANCE

Atherton bursts through the doors followed closely by Kent.

ATHERTON
Simon!

He passes the TAPE DECK and snaps it OFF.

ANGLE

Everything comes to a stop as Atherton heads for Mitch, all eyes trained on the pending drama.

ATHERTON
You were supposed to be working in the lab tonight.

KENT
(chiming in)
Yeah!

CONTINUED:

MITCH
I was and...

ATHERTON
You're at Cal Tech to work, not screw around.

KENT
Yeah!

ATHERTON
I took a big chance, recommending a fifteen-year-old. If this continues... you lose your scholarship.

KENT
Yeah!

Atherton has heard enough from Kent.

ATHERTON
(annoyed)
Kent!

KENT
(he stiffens up)
Yes, sir.

As Atherton exits he passes Cornell.

CORNELL
Dr. Atherton?

ATHERTON
What?!

CORNELL
Are you wearing makeup?

LOUISA
You know you really should hide those crows feet.

He growls and exits.

ANGLE

Mitch stands there, silent and frightened; everyone is staring at him, he runs out the door.

ANGLE - JORDAN

She feels sorry for Mitch.

ATHERTON'S LAB - LATER THAT NIGHT

Mitch, tired, looking like a kid who's been working for hours, finishes inserting a thyratron switch on the laser. He turns the laser on, sparks and smoke engulf the switch. Frustrated, he turns off the laser, throws his screwdriver against it in anger, and slumps into a chair and starts to cry.

INT. LAB HALLWAY - EARLY MORNING

Several of the lab assistants, including Kent and his friends, cross toward the lab. Just then Mitch comes out. He looks exhausted and very upset. As he passes Kent, he turns away from his stare.

KENT
(mock concern)
Gee, he looks depressed.

The other guys yuk it up. They turn and watch Mitch go into a phone booth at the end of the hall. Kent's eyes light up with an idea.

INT. PHONE BOOTH

Mitch is on the phone. He's very upset.

MITCH
I know, Mom, but I don't like it here anymore. I want to live at home with you...
(reluctant)
Yeah, and Dad. I want to go back to high school, I -- Dad did what?... Rented out my room?... Well, why can't Mr. Echevarria and I share it?... Please, Ma, I want to come home.

INT. LAB ROOF - TIGHT ON A TAPE RECORDER - DAWN

Its reels are spinning. Over its speaker we can hear Mitch's VOICE.

MITCH (V.O.)
(crying)
Please let me come home. I don't want to stay here.

WIDEN to reveal Kent, Carter and Bodie standing next to the tape recorder. Bodie is holding a device that looks a little like a gun with a receiving dish on one end. Kent is wearing a headset.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KENT
I knew he was upset, but this is too good to be true. He's crying now.

Bodie and Carter chuckle. As Mitch pleads with his mother, we --

INT. RICKETS HALL - DINING ROOM - NEXT MORNING

The dorm population is eating their breakfast. Kent and his unholy two are smugly downing their "Shredded Wheat," Jordan and Ick share a table, Mitch is alone off in the corner, it's obvious he hasn't slept.

Chris enters and crosses to Kent. A WAITRESS, middle-aged is serving coffee.

CHRIS
Kent... let's never fight like that again.

KENT
What?

CHRIS
We've been lovers too long to have a silly argument come between us.

The Waitress stares disgustedly at Kent.

KENT
Chris...

CHRIS
Please. Don't speak. You were right. Tonight I'll wear the cowboy suit.

Chris exits.

KENT
(sputtering)
You...

WAITRESS
Do your parents know about this?

KENT
Of course not!

She nods and exits. Kent calls after her.

KENT
(continuing)
Nobody knows. I mean there's nothing to know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Harassed. Kent pours sugar in his coffee and the top comes off. Kent burns.

CHRIS
Please... don't speak. I'll never say anything bad about your omelets again.

KENT
You degenerate.

CHRIS
I love it when you talk like that.
(he shivers)
Ooooo.

Chris walks away.

ANGLE

Chris walks over to Mitch.

CHRIS
Where were you all last night?

MITCH
I came back to the lab and worked on the laser.

CHRIS
Jordan told me about Atherton coming down on you. What exactly did...

Mitch abruptly turns his back to Chris and continues eating. Chris sees the conversation is over.

CHRIS
(continuing; referring to the sentence he never finished)
... Let me hold that thought and get back to ya.

ANGLE

Kent, Bodie, and Carter. The gentle strains of CLASSICAL MUSIC fill the room.

KENT
Something soothing to eat by.

The tape is abruptly interrupted by the recording Kent made of Mitch on the phone to his mother.

ANGLE - MITCH

He can't believe his ears. His expression runs from surprise to embarrassment.

ANGLE

Everyone stops eating and listens to Mitch begging his mother to come home. Kent and his friends are laughing it up, having a good time.

ANGLE - MITCH

He's in a state of shock.

ANGLE - KENT

KENT
(he can't wait)
Here comes the crying!

He loves it.

ANGLE - MITCH

He runs out of the dining room. Kent and his friends love Mitch's reaction. It makes them laugh even harder.

ANGLE - CHRIS, JORDAN AND ICK

CHRIS
(to himself)
A little low.

INT. MITCH'S ROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Mitch is trying to pack, but it's difficult because the place is in such disarray. Chris enters. He watches and tries to think of what to say.

CHRIS
Okay, if you want to leave, go ahead. But you'll miss the fun.

MITCH
(sour)
What fun?

CHRIS
We've invented new viruses and we're gonna release 'em in Kent's room.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mitch turns on Chris with surprising hostility.

MITCH
That's sick! That's a sick thing to do.

CHRIS
Hey, I was just kidding, I --

MITCH
You're always just kidding. There's something wrong with you.

CHRIS
Just a second --

MITCH
Last night, in the laser lab, I needed your help and all you wanted to do was surf with beauticians.

CHRIS
I tried to help you. I tried to help you relax.

MITCH
I don't have time to relax. I have work to do. Can't you see, I was given a great gift?

CHRIS
That suitcase? It's nice...

MITCH
My mind. And I don't want to waste it. Like you're doing.

CHRIS
Oh. Little Mitchie's very bitchy.

MITCH
Don't call me Little Mitchie. That's what they called me in high school.

CHRIS
They called me "Chris the Wiss"...

MITCH
Really?

CHRIS
Sure. You think growing up was a pleasure for me?
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRIS (CONT'D)
When I was three-years-old, I balanced my father's checkbook so they had me tested. They found out I was a genius, so they sent me to special schools and fired their accountant. My father was so intimidated, he stopped speaking to me. My mother was so afraid I'd hurt my precious brain, she made me go to school wearing a steel hat. That didn't make me self-conscious, right. I still have the hat. I cut holes in it and use it to strain spaghetti. Then Dr. Atherton brought me to Cal Tech and I was a real troll. A grinder. Studied all the time.

MITCH
You!

CHRIS
(dramatic)
And then one night. In this room. I was sitting right where you are now. I had a vision. I saw him.

MITCH
God.

CHRIS
Hopsfield.

MITCH
Hopsfield? Oh! The guy I saw go in the closet.

CHRIS
Yeah. Laslo Hopsfield. I followed him. Through the closet. Down into the steam tunnels. And down there I saw the most disgusting thing I've ever seen.

MITCH
(frightened)
What?

CHRIS
Hopsfield in his pajamas.

Mitch laughs.

CHRIS
(continuing; lighter, but sincere)
And I talked to the guy.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Turned out that in the seventies he was the number one stud around here. Smarter than you and me put together.

MITCH
What happened?

CHRIS
Something awful. He graduated. Went to work for some chemical company. One day someone told him he was making stuff that was killing people. I think it was his mother. He freaked. He was totally unprepared for the real world. He had no philosophy. He thought science had the answer for everything. So he started hanging around campus. After a while, he comes out late at night to hit the computer rooms. He's been playing one game of Dungeons and Dragons for three years. No life. Just science. The end. Thank you all for coming. Stay tuned for "Happy Days."

MITCH
Am I gonna wind up in a steam tunnel?

CHRIS
No! See, that's what I figured out. The same stuff that made our lives so miserable -- our brains -- can be the thing to make it great. When you're smart, people need you. You can learn how to work that for fun and profit.

MITCH
Yeah. You have some kind of arrangement going with Atherton, don't you? That's why you don't have to study.

CHRIS
Hey! Don't be smart. Nobody likes a smart genius.
(pause)
You're a nice kid, if you leave I'll miss you.

MITCH
If I stay, what should I do, I mean --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRIS
The first thing to do is get even with Kent. It's a moral imperative.

MITCH
(smiles)
Yeah.

EXT. CAL TECH STUDENT PARKING LOT - DEAD OF NIGHT

Chris, holding a flashlight, Ick, carrying a tool kit, Mitch and Jordan are skulking through the lot.

ANGLE - JORDAN

She stands by a new Lamborghini.

JORDAN
Over here!

The others rush over to her.

CHRIS
Kent's Lamborghini. Good goin'.

He trains his light on the license plate. It reads. "KENT."

CHRIS
(continuing)
He put his name on his car. He does the same thing with his underwear.

Ick flops down a tool kit.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE

Chris, Mitch, Jordan and Ick working on Kent's car. They are undoing bolts, taking out wires, removing the fenders, etc. The last DISSOLVE and we see the car is gone. And no sign of our foursome.

EXT. RICKETS HALL - NIGHT

Chris quietly goes up the stairs inside the dorm carrying a steering wheel. Jordan enters, rolling a tire, Ick and Mitch have an engine on a flatbed cart. All are covered in grease.

EXT. KENT'S ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Filthy with crankcase oil, Chris, Mitch, Ick, and Jordan exit and scamper down the hall. All are very pleased with themselves.

EXT. KENT'S ROOM - LATER THAT MORNING

Kent, Bodie, and Carter are coming down the hall.

KENT
Now at Northern Electronics, you get the stock options, but not the free housing. It's a dilemma.

He opens his door and all three walk inside.

INT. KENT'S ROOM

CLOSEUP -- KENT. His jaw drops open.

ANGLE

Sitting in the middle of the room is Kent's Lamborghini, its MOTOR RUNNING. Kent and the other guys slowly approach it, as if it were a mirage. Kent touches his car, he can't believe it.

CARTER
Hey, Kent, that's your car.

ANGLE

Chris and Mitch enter.

CHRIS
Oh, great! Kent, can you give us a lift down the hall?

Mitch starts to laugh. Kent puts two and two together and comes up to Chris. He's furious.

KENT
You went too far this time, Kinsley.

CHRIS
I had help.

KENT
(surprised)
You did it, too?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MITCH
Well...

KENT
You're going to be sorry for this.

MITCH
(worried)
Yeah...?
(forceful)
Well, shove it up your ass!

Both Kent and Chris are surprised by Mitch's courageousness.

KENT
I'm going to get you guys. Dr. Atherton's gonna hear about this.

He storms out of his room followed by Bodie and Carter. Chris throws his arms around Mitch.

CHRIS
(calls to Kent)
Hey, Kent, you owe us ten dollars for gas.
(to Mitch)
He'll never pay us.

EXT. ATHERTON'S HOUSE- NIGHT

We see the restoration of Atherton's house has been completed. It looks picture perfect. Chris rings the BELL. A very pretty girl answers the door. Her name is SUSAN.

INT. AHTERTON'S HOME- NIGHT

It's interior is splendid. A place anyone would love to move into.

Chris enters.

CHRIS
Hi. Dr. Atherton asked me to drop by. What did he ask you to do?

SUSAN
He's with someone in his study.

CHRIS
Yeah? Can we peek?

CONTINUED:

BUTLER
I'll tell him you're here.

CHRIS
Snitch.

Chris notices, sitting on the sofa, a pretty girl with large breasts. He's about to walk over, when Atherton and General Decker enter.

ATHERTON
Ah, Kinsley. I'll be right with you. Goodbye, General. It's been a pleasure.

DECKER
Results. Not excuses, results.

ATHERTON
You'll get 'em, sir.
(to Chris)
Give me a minute, Kinsley, and then meet me in my study.

Atherton exits. Chris stares at Decker. Decker does not enjoy being stared at.

CHRIS
You're not Robert E. Lee, are you?

DECKER
Of course not.

CHRIS
Peggy Lee?

DECKER
What?!

CHRIS
Pinky Lee. All right. I give up, who are you?

DECKER
General Decker, United States Air Force.

CHRIS
Ah!

He extends his hand.

CHRIS
(continuing)
Chris Kinsley, United States person.

Decker reluctantly shakes his hand.

ANGLE- THE PRETTY GIRL

CHRIS
Have you ever seen cans that big before?

DECKER
She's my daughter.

CHRIS
Oh. Then you have.

Atherton approaches.

ATHERTON(o.s.)
(annoyed)
Kinsley, I'm waiting for you.

Chris senses this is a good time to exit.

CHRIS
I have to go. I'm being fitted for a diaphragm.

Chris exits. Decker looks after Chris with fire in his eyes.

INT. ATHERTON'S STUDY

Chris enters.

CHRIS
Hey, nice study.

ATHERTON
Just a second. Did you wipe your feet before you came in?

CHRIS
Gee, no. I'll do it now.

He wipes his feet right there.

Atherton angrily grabs a dustbuster and works it on the rug. He finishes.

Chris sits.

CHRIS
What's up, Doc?

ATHERTON
I'm withdrawing your recommendation to PEI.

CHRIS
What?

ATHERTON
I'm giving Kent the job.

CHRIS
Just for wiping my feet?

ATHERTON
It's just come to my attention that you've been neglecting your classes this semester.

CHRIS
What?!

Chris jumps up. The chair tips over.

ATHERTON
Be careful! That's Duncan Fyfe.
(calmer)
You know, Chris, it's a sad thing when a young man with your potential---

CHRIS
You shit! We had a deal.

ATHERTON
We did?

CHRIS
You shit! You said if I worked on your goddamn laser project, you'd slide me through my courses and get me the PEI job.

ATHERTON
I did? That doesn't sound very ethical.

CHRIS
You dick!

ATHERTON
As a matter of fact, the way you're going in your courses, I don't see how you're going to graduate.

Chris is burning, but he doesn't know what to do.

ATHERTON
(continuing)
You should have worked harder, Kinsley.

CHRIS
You mean on your laser. I didn't find the final equation and that's why you're screwing me.

ATHERTON
You should have worked harder, Kinsley.

Chris' mind is racing.

ATHERTON
(continuing)
I know what you're thinking. But I'm not that nitwit, Kent. Don't mess with me. You don't know who the heck you're messing with. Now get out.

Chris goes.

EXT. COMPUTER CENTER - NIGHT

A tiny pool of light is spilling onto HOPSFIELD in the Computer Center window as he pecks away at a computer.

CHRIS

He stops and watches Hopsfield.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Mitch sees Chris and crosses to him.

MITCH
What are you doing?

CHRIS
(serious)
Hopsfield... I don't want to end up like that.

Mitch is puzzled, he turns to Chris. This is a Chris he hasn't seen before. He's dropped his guard and what's exposed is just a kid frightened of his future.

MITCH
What happened?

CHRIS
Atherton took the PEI job from me. And I'm facing flunking out of school. How about that for an afternoon, sports fans!

MITCH
I don't understand. How could you get yourself into a situation like that. You're too smart.

CHRIS
That's how. By being too smart. I didn't want to grind my way through here like the other dumb geniuses so I worked it out with Atherton. He was begging me for a year to work on his goddamn laser, so finally I said, "What the Hell." I'll take care of him, he'll take care of me. And he sure did. You sleep with pits, you wake up smelly. I think Aristotle said that. It was him or Eva Gabor.

MITCH
You can pass your finals.

CHRIS
Nah. I'm flaming out. I'm already lit.

MITCH
We can really grind. I can help you. Studying is what I do best.

CONTINUED:

Chris looks at Hopsfield.

CHRIS
All right. I'm in your little hands. But not until tomorrow. Tonight there's something I want to do.

INT. COMPUTER CENTER - EARLY EVENING

Chris, Ick, Mitch, Jordan, and Hopsfield are at computer terminals. They're feverishly hitting the keyboards, searching to break various codes.

Their computers are equipped with a modem attachment, a telephone device that enables a computer to interface with another.

CHRIS

Numbers fill his screen.

ICK

Numbers fill his screen.

JORDAN

Numbers fill her screen.

MITCH

Numbers fill his screen.

HOPSFIELD

In his own world, oblivious to the others. He holds up a McDonald's game card. Thinks for a beat, then feeds digital information into the computer under the heading: McDonald's "Sweepstakes."

ANGLE - MITCH

MITCH
I got it! I broke through! I'm in the American Express computer.

MITCH'S SCREEN

It prints out: "ATHERTON JEROME K.
5698...

MITCH (O.S.)
Here's his account number.

It finishes printing: "... 089708... 40001..."

ANGLE - CHRIS

CHRIS
Allow me.

He reaches over Mitch's shoulders and types into the computer.

ANGLE - TERMINAL SCREEN

"CANCELED"

ANGLE - CHRIS

CHRIS
Our favorite guy just lost his Express card... Reason...

ANGLE - SCREEN

Chris types in... "REASON FOR CANCELLATION... MAJOR JERK"

CHRIS
That's reason enough, I guess.

ANGLE - JORDAN

JORDAN
Mastercharge coming up!

Atherton's information begins pouring onto her screen.

CHRIS
Alright!

MITCH
Let me do this one.

CHRIS
Be my guest.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mitch sits next to Jordan. You can see she enjoys being close to him. Mitch types into the keyboard.

CHRIS
(continuing)
Everyone keep punching away. I want his Visacard, his checking account, anything we can dig up.

The search continues in earnest. Including Hopsfield who puts his energies into his quest for fame and cash.

INT. RESTAURANT - LATER THAT NIGHT

A very expensive, very posh interior. Seated at a table is Atherton, Jensen, and Kent. They sip coffee, Kent pours wine and goes through the obnoxious routine of smelling the bouquet, holding the glass up to the light, checking for impurities, etc. Finally he takes a sip. He reports the results as if the others cared.

KENT
Bracing.

JENSEN
So, then... Kent, we'll have you drop up to PEI for a little tour next week.

KENT
I'm looking forward to it, sir.

The waiter and MAITRE D', a man of tremendous pompous dignity, enter and cross to their table. Their faces tell us something is wrong.

MAITRE D'
Dr. Atherton.

ATHERTON
Yes?

MAITRE D'
It seems besides your Visa card and Mastercharge, your American Express card has also been canceled.

ATHERTON
Why?

MAITRE D'
(he's rather not say)
A reason that will go unsaid.

ATHERTON
I <u>demand</u> to know why!

CONTINUED:

MAITRE D'
Because... because you are a major jerk.

KENT
They can take it away for that?

Atherton gives Kent a look that says, "Shut up or I'll kill you." Kent gets the message and decides to drink some more wine.

ATHERTON
(hot)
Then I'll write a check.

MAITRE D'
Your check guarantee card is not good. And we cannot accept your driver's license. Our Telecheck computer states you died in 1976 of syphilis.

Jensen and Kent react as Atherton slams down his napkin in disgust.

MONTAGE: CHRIS STUDYING

Mitch is tutoring Chris in the library, the coffee house as they eat lunch, and in their dorm room. Jordan is pouring over facts in a biology lab, Chris listens intently. Mitch in Atherton's lab. Working hard. Chris actually in a classroom and taking notes. The professor can't believe his eyes. Chris gives him a wink and a big dopey smile. It's early evening and Ick and Chris are in the Chemistry Lab. Atherton's lab. Mitch is running through an impressive-looking experiment. Atherton, uptight as usual, is screaming at a student for incorrect work. Mitch looks on, feeling sorry for the kid. Chris leaving a classroom, carrying books and note pad. Kent sees this and is shocked. Chris and Mitch's dorm -- Ick, Jordan, and Mitch are tutoring Chris who snaps back answers to questions.

INT. DORM LIBRARY - NIGHT

Chris is studying hard. Mitch is asleep, his head on the table.

MITCH
(in his sleep)
Please, Vito, not in the mailbox again.

CHRIS
Mitch!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mitch wakes up.

MITCH
Oh... I was just reliving some high school highlights.

CHRIS
Look, you don't have to stay up with me. It's not like we're driving. Get some sleep. You're a growing boy. I hope.

Hopsfield enters in his pajamas.

HOPSFIELD
All right, I'm here. Chris, I dug into the computer and got every question ever asked on every final in the history of the school.

CHRIS
Why didn't you bring 'em?

HOPSFIELD
(insulted)
I memorized them.

Chris and Mitch look at each other, impressed and a little frightened.

MITCH
All right. You're on, I'm off. I'm going to sleep.

HOPSFIELD
Want my pajamas?

MITCH
Uhhh... Thanks, no.

He exits.

HOPSFIELD
Smart kid. He's going to grow five inches in the next year.

CHRIS
How do you... Never mind.

INT. MITCH'S ROOM

He opens the door and enters. It's dark.

FEMALE VOICE
Mitch?

CONTINUED:

MITCH
(surprised)
Jordan?

He turns on the light. Much to his surprise and ours, seated in on his bed is Sherry Nugil, the girl Chris met at PEI -- the genius groupie. She's dressed for the occasion.

SHERRY
Mitch Simon?

MITCH
Who?

SHERRY
I'm Sherry Nugil. And I've been waiting three years for this.

MITCH
For what?

SHERRY
For you to be old enough?

MITCH
For what?

SHERRY
For this.

She kisses him.

SHERRY
(continuing)
Are you ready?

MITCH
For what?

SHERRY
Why do you keep saying, "For what?"?

MITCH
'Cause so far it's working great.

INT. JORDAN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jordan is using a big machine to sand her floors. There's a KNOCK on the door.

JORDAN
(shouts)
Come in.

CONTINUED:

Mitch enters. He appears dazed and disheveled.

JORDAN
Oh, hi, Mitch. I'm just sanding the floor.

MITCH
Could you turn that off a second?

She does. She starts moving the furniture back.

JORDAN
What's wrong? Why are you sweating?

MITCH
I... I just... I came back from helping Chris and there was this woman in my room.

Jordan stops. It's the first time we've seen her doing nothing.

JORDAN
A woman?

MITCH
(with emphasis)
A woman. I mean she was... blessed.

JORDAN
(upset)
Oh?

MITCH
And she wanted to... How can I say this so as not to offend you?

JORDAN
Jump you?

MITCH
Yeah. I hope you're not offended.

JORDAN
So what happened?

MITCH
(excited)
She kissed me. Then she took off her clothes. Then I took off my clothes -- she had to help me. I kept blacking out -- then... it was unbelievable.

JORDAN
You made it with her?

CONTINUED:

MITCH
No. That's what was unbelievable.

JORDAN
Sure.

MITCH
It's true. I stopped her and told her I didn't want to.

JORDAN
Afraid?

MITCH
No... I mean I really did want to... but not with her.

He looks at her hopefully. She smiles.

INT. ATHERTON'S CLASSROOM - DAY

The oral exams are in progress. A female student, JEAN, is in the midst of wrapping up her explanation of the Fourier Series. A complicated set of equations fills the blackboard. Atherton sits at his desk giving her his intense concentration.

JEAN
(going over her figures)
Let E be the subset of any integers.

ANGLE

among the students we see Chris and Kent giving Jean their undivided attention.

JEAN
Let T_E be the set of an E-spectoral trigonometric polynomials.

ANGLE - ATHERTON

ATHERTON
How can you be sure that l_E is a closed linear subspace of l ?

JEAN
P is greater than, or equal to one... this always holds.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ATHERTON
Thank you, Jean. Very good.

She heaves a sigh of relief and returns to her seat.

ATHERTON
(continuing; coldly)
Chris, what is your topic?

CHRIS
Neotherian and artinian rings.

ATHERTON
(gesturing to the blackboard)
If you would?

Secretly Atherton relishes the thought of Chris humiliating himself in front of his class.

Chris crosses to the blackboard. He passes Kent who is wearing a smug smile. One that says "You're dead, jerk off."

ANGLE - CHRIS

As he erases the blackboard, he begins, rattling it off at great speed. This is a kid who knows what he's talking about.

CHRIS
(at great speed)
Rings are not assumed to be commutative... nor to have identifying elements.

The blackboard is erased. He begins the equation.

CHRIS
(continuing)
Definition... Module A... is said to satisfy the ascending chain condition on submodules (or to be noetherian)...

ANGLE - ATHERTON

He listens intently.

ANGLE - CHRIS

CHRIS
If for every chain A_1 contained in A_2 contained in A_3 contained in et cetera.... et cetera... of submodules of A... there is an integer such that A_1 equals A_N...
(he turns to the class)
Kent, am I going too fast for you?

ANGLE - KENT

He frowns disapprovingly.

ANGLE - CHRIS

He turns back to the board.

CHRIS
For all I is greater than or equal to N. Similarly we have the descending chain condition on submodules (or artinian)...

He turns to Atherton.

ANGLE - ATHERTON

He sits unemotional, silently impressed.

CHRIS
We can also define left and right noetherians and left and right artinian... in the obvious way. How'm I doin'?

ATHERTON
(certain this will trip Chris up)
How does this relate to the maximal conditions on submodules?

ANGLE - KENT

He crosses his fingers, praying for Chris not to come through.

ANGLE - CHRIS

CHRIS
It can be seen that a module A satisfied the ascending chain condition... if and only if... it satisfies the maximal condition similarly for descending chains and the minimal condition. Now...
(he turns to the board and starts writing)
... I have a great recipe for Toll House cookies I'd like to pass on... One cup of baking soda...

ATHERTON
(ignoring Chris)
That concludes the oral examinations. We move on to the written exams.

Chris returns to his seat.

ANGLE - KENT

He's not the least bit pleased Chris has scored well on his oral.

KENT
You aren't home yet... buddy boy!

CHRIS
Is it okay if I name my first child after you? Dipshit Kinsley... has a nice ring to it.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ATHERTON'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Atherton goes over papers as his students are busily taking the written section of the test.

ANGLE - CHRIS

He seems to be breezing through it.

ANGLE - KENT

He's taking the test. He looks up and is distressed at Chris' apparent lack of trouble. Chris looks over and throws Kent a big kiss. Kent turns away immediately.

ANGLE - ATHERTON

Carmichael summons him from the doorway. Atherton rises and crosses to him.

ATHERTON
(reprimanding)
This is my class hour!

CARMICHAEL
(visibly distressed)
We got a problem.

Atherton enters the hall and closes the door behind.

EXT. HALLWAY

CARMICHAEL
Decker is screaming he...

ATHERTON
Not so loud!

CARMICHAEL
(loud whisper)
We're past the deadline. He... wants to see a working laser.

ATHERTON
(snaps back)
It's not ready. I can't find the right power source. We've tried every conductor from copper to aluminum and...

CARMICHAEL
(cutting him off)
Decker wants it solved by the end of the week or he'll give the assignment to someone else.

ATHERTON
(close to losing it)
I'm doing all I can, dammit!

He storms back into his classroom.

INT. CLASSROOM

Atherton approaches Kent.

ATHERTON
I want you to speed things up in the lab. I want things to start happening.

He crosses to his desk.

ANGLE - CHRIS

He looks up and is amused at Atherton's concern. He finishes his last question. He gets out of his seat.

ANGLE - ATHERTON

sitting at his desk. Chris places his test on the desk. Atherton looks up.

ANGLE - CHRIS

He has a big grin on his face. He places an apple on Atherton's desk. He exits. Atherton tosses the apple in the wastebasket. The APPLE EXPLODES.

INT. MATH CLASS

Mitch listens intently as the professor is going over a long, involved equation. Suddenly the academic atmosphere is broken by Chris throwing open the door.

CHRIS
I made it!

He runs over to Mitch and crawls all over him, stands on his desk and throws papers into the air in celebration.

CHRIS
(continuing)
I'm sure I aced it! You pulled me through. I'd kiss you, but that would look stupid.
(to girl behind him)
So I'll kiss you.

He stops and turns to all the students and the professor staring at him in amazement.

CHRIS
(continuing; oh, so casual)
Am I interrupting anything?

INT. ATHERTON'S OFFICE

Atherton is seated at his desk grading the day's tests. Kent enters.

KENT
Did you want to see me, Dr. Atherton?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ATHERTON
Yes, I have a lecture in a few minutes. I'd like you to finish grading today's tests.

KENT
Certainly, sir.

Atherton gets up. Kent sits in his chair and takes a pipe from his shirt pocket. Atherton sees the pipe and scowls.

ATHERTON
Don't smoke in my office.

KENT
Yes, sir.

ATHERTON
Also, there's a certain student who needs to pass the written exam I'd be happy to see fail.

He tosses a test in front of Kent.

INSERT - TEST PAPER

We see the name of the student whose paper this is: "Chris, I'm crazy about ya; Kinsley."

ANGLE - ROOM

ATHERTON
I'll be back in an hour.

He exits.

KENT

He can't wait to check Chris' answers. He starts immediately. The first five answers are correct. Disappointed, but not dismayed, he goes on. Chris still doesn't have any wrong. Kent is getting annoyed. Chris is acing the test. He jumps ahead a page and checks the top few answers. All correct. Kent is starting to anger. He skims a few of the harder answers on the last page and finds Chris is correct on all of them. Kent is thoroughly pissed off. Then, suddenly, his anger subsides. He's got an idea. He searches in Atherton's desk drawers until he finds what he wants. He takes out a blank test.

INSERT - BLANK TEST

Kent signs Chris' name to the test.

BACK TO KENT

He sets the blank test on the desk. He crumples up Chris' test and puts it in the wastebasket. Kent is consumed with an inner peace. He can now seek revenge on Chris once and for all. He taps his pen on his braces thoughtfully, then begins to re-take Chris' test for him.

INSERT - BLANK TEST

Next to it is the master test. Kent is clearly marking the wrong answers.

KENT

His face has a maniacal Dr. Frankenstein look. He's creating his own little monster for Chris.

EXT. CAMPUS - CLOSEUP - MILLIKEN STATUE - SOMETIME LATER - DAY

It's painted to look like it's wearing black face, lips rimmed in white. The statue reads: "Our founder, Al Jolson."

ANOTHER ANGLE

Chris runs by the statue on his way to Atherton's classroom.

EXT. CAMPUS - LATER THE SAME DAY

Chris is running to Atherton's classroom.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE ATHERTON'S CLASSROOM DOOR

Posted on the wall are the results of the test. Several students are gathered, checking for their names. Chris runs down the hall and eagerly joins the group. He thumbs down the list of names, looking for his.

INSERT - GRADES LIST

Chris finds his name. He's failed.

CHRIS

He's just devastated. He's in shock. He can't believe what he just saw. He has to speak to Atherton right now. He runs down the hall and round a corner.

EXT. CAMPUS - DAY

Atherton is walking and chatting with a pretty female STUDENT. Chris runs and catches up with him. He's out of breath, desperate.

CHRIS
I gotta talk to you.

ATHERTON
I'm through for the day.

CHRIS
It's important. My test...

ATHERTON
You failed.

CHRIS
How could I have? I studied my nuts off!

ATHERTON
I told you. You're burned out. You've failed me and yourself miserably.

He walks away with the Coed. Chris is stunned. He stands confused a beat, then runs. He almost knocks several people over.

INT. ATHERTON'S LAB - DUSK

Chris sits quietly in the lab's semi-darkness. He takes in the room for one last look. He sees the equation on the board. It still seems unsolvable to him. He turns on the laser. We see its weak beam letting off a soft glow in the room.

The glow of the beam is reflecting off something in Atherton's office. Drawn to it, Chris enters the office.

The reflection is bouncing off an aluminum foil wrapper which surrounds the remnants of a sandwich in the trash can near Atherton's desk. He picks it up, along with a plastic baggie, which is lying next to it. He stares at these discards for a moment. Then he shifts his focus to the laser. We see something start to click inside his head.

EXT. STUDENT COFFEE HOUSE

Chris is running in front of the coffee house. He spots Mitch, Ick and Jordan who are walking towards him.

MITCH
We've been looking all around for you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JORDAN
We know you failed.

She hugs him sympathetically.

Chris lets out a yell of ecstasy and jumps into the large memorial fountain, hopping around like a man who's gone over the edge.

MITCH
(reminding him)
Chris, you flunked.

CHRIS
The power source... I did it... The laser... it's incredible...

Chris jumps out of the fountain and grabs Mitch's shoulder.

CHRIS
(continuing)
You got to see it... It works...

MITCH
(realizing)
The laser. You got it to work. Does Atherton know?

CHRIS
No.

MITCH
(happy)
You gotta tell him! That'll fix everything for you.

CHRIS
I'll go get him... Meet me in the lab.

Chris runs off.

EXT. ATHERTON'S HOUSE

Chris comes running up the walk and knocks on the front door. Atherton answers the door. He is less than thrilled to see Chris.

Just then the pretty Coed he was walking with earlier starts to come down the stairs. She is dressed only in one of Atherton's shirts.

COED
Jerry?

CONTINUED:

She sees he is talking to someone and beats a speedy retreat back up the stairs.

ATHERTON
Kinsley... What in hell do you mean by coming to my home like this? I told you --

CHRIS
(excited)
I did it!

Atherton looks at him strangely as we --

CUT TO:

INT. ATHERTON'S LAB

Mitch, Ick, Jordan and the other lab assistants, including Kent, Bodie and Carter, stand near Atherton as Chris explains what he's done.

CHRIS
So I thought to increase the pulses you have to increase the efficiency of the conductor. So I jury-rigged a Bluime line out of aluminum sheeting and plastic wrap.

He points to the roll of aluminum over which are sheets of plastic. They run from the power source to the laser.

KENT
(to Atherton)
This is a complete waste of time.

CHRIS
(holds up pliers)
Kent, you want me to make you sterile?

Chris flips a switch on the laser. The light emitted from it is almost blinding. Within its ray there's a shower of sparkling lights like millions of Fourth of July sparklers mixed with Tinkerbell's fairy dust. It is truly a spectacular sight.

ATHERTON
(awestruck)
You did it. I don't believe it. You did it.

As you'd expect, Kent and his friends are far from thrilled. Jordan goes over to Chris and hugs him happily. Chris turns to Mitch and holds out his arms.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRIS
Well...

Mitch gives Chris a big hug.

ANGLE - THE LASER

It burns a hole right through the exterior of the building, sending its beam out into the sky, lighting a passing cumulus cloud.

ATHERTON
(already seeing his name in Newsweek)
Amazing.

MITCH
What an advance this will be for the medical profession.

ATHERTON
Medical?... Oh, yes, yes.

Atherton snaps off the laser.

ATHERTON
(continuing; sincere)
Chris, you have contributed to the construction of the most powerful laser ever built... About that test. You can take it again tomorrow. And I think we can get that job back for you at PEI.

As he exits Chris smiles happily. He turns to Kent.

CHRIS
(foreboding)
Uh oh.

Kent is shocked. He feels PEI slipping away.

MITCH
I got a good idea. Let's celebrate. What do you say?

Everyone but Kent and his pals let out a cheer.

CHRIS
Kent, you with us?

KENT
(totally frustrated)
Oh... eat me.

He exits.

INT. ATHERTON'S OFFICE

Atherton enters his office, sits and dials a number. As he waits for someone to answer, we see he's a very happy man. He's most anxious to tell someone of what has occurred.

ATHERTON
Come on, come on...

Finally the phone is answered.

ATHERTON
(continuing)
Don, it's happened. Tell Decker he has his laser.

He hangs up, sits back, and gloats.

INT. STUDENT COFFEE HOUSE - NIGHT

The place is packed and alive with excitement. Besides our people, we see the members of Atherton's lab, minus Kent's gang. The JUKEBOX IS BLARING out an upbeat ROCK NUMBER as the kids celebrate. Jordan, Ick, Mitch and Chris are having a great time drinking and singing along with the music.

Chris sees that Mitch and Jordan are holding hands. They're feeding each other French fries and giggling.

CHRIS
This is so cute.

Chris turns away and pantomimes nausea.

HOPSFIELD

He enters through the coffee house back door. He approaches Chris.

HOPSFIELD
I'm ready.

CHRIS
Excellent.
(getting everyone's attention)
Hey! Listen, everyone!

He gets the attention of the room.

CHRIS
(continuing)
Everybody outside for a little laser fun.

CONTINUED:

A cheer from the gathering and everyone files out the back door. As they exit, Hopsfield turns to Chris.

HOPSFIELD
I've been thinking about your laser solution --

Chris cuts him off.

CHRIS
Tell me outside.

INT. DARKENED NIGHT-TIME SKY

We are watching a laser light show that brightens the heavens. The sky is filled with dazzling colors and patterns.

EXT. COFFEE HOUSE - BACK YARD - NIGHT

The coffee house crowd is "oohing" and "ahhing" at the laser exhibition.

ANGLE - CHRIS

Hopsfield sits next to him.

HOPSFIELD
You increased the laser's power output to 50,000 watts. A medical laser uses ten watts tops. It makes no sense.

CHRIS
(breezing it over)
What does these days?

MITCH
(thinking it over)
No, wait a minute. What he's saying is right...

HOPSFIELD
With a medical laser that size you could perform surgery from deep space.

CHRIS
(to Mitch)
Why didn't one of <u>us</u> realize that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOPSFIELD
(almost chuckles)
That's the way we're trained. We're given a problem and we can't wait to solve it. No broader outlook, just solve the problem. I've been there.

MITCH
(troubled)
Surgery from deep space?

Chris thinks for a while. An ominous thought strikes him.

CHRIS
What if it's a weapon?

MITCH
No way.

CHRIS
At Atherton's house I met this General Decker... you should've seen his daughter.

ICK
Decker?... I read an article in Time. Isn't he the guy pushing the development of laser weaponry?

MITCH
Atherton wouldn't do that.

CHRIS
Let's find out.

INT. COFFEE HOUSE

It's deserted save for Ick, Mitch and Jordan who are crowded around Chris at the pay phone. In the b.g., the light show continues.

CHRIS
General Decker, please. Jerry Atherton calling. Yes, thank you.

He puts the receiver into a speaker box. After a few moments Decker comes to the phone.

DECKER
(on phone)
Jerry, we're all excited! Congratulations, this puts us light years ahead of the Russians in laser weapons!

CONTINUED:

The gang is crushed by the news. No one can speak. Decker has been silent waiting for Atherton to speak.

DECKER
(continuing; on phone)
Jer...?

Chris hangs up the phone.

CHRIS
(pissed)
A medical laser, it's a goddamn weapon...!

JORDAN
Atherton, that jogging syphilitic microbe.

ICK
I'm depressed. I should've listened to my parents. Become a ping-pong pro.

MITCH
He used us!

JORDAN
Downtown Schmidlap.

MITCH
Excuse me?

JORDAN
Ernie "Downtown" Schmidlap. From my high school. He was captain of everything. He'd just smile at you and the next thing you knew you were waking up in the nurse's office. One day he told me he wanted to "date me up." So for a month he'd come over and I'd do his homework for him. He was going to take me to the prom. But once he passed his courses, he took Roberta Stump. She had a trick pelvis. I stayed home and rewired our housekeeper's TV.

ICK
That's awful!

MITCH
You think that hurts? You should've met my Uncle Stan. He was a weasel.

ICK
That bad, huh?

CONTINUED:

MITCH
No, that was his lodge. The Royal Order of Friendly Weasels. Every Wednesday when I was about ten, he'd take me down to his lodge meeting and he'd challenge people to call out two three-digit numbers. I had to multiply them in my head in five seconds. They'd do this for money. Uncle Stan told my parents he was taking me to the ballgame. Of course, after the meeting he'd take me for ice cream.

ICK
That's nice.

MITCH
Well... he'd take me to the supermarket and I had to dip my hand in.

CHRIS
We all had a Downtown Schmidlap or an Uncle Stan. And we all thought that if we came here, we wouldn't get hurt any more. That's why we got to get back at Atherton. This is brain drain in the lowest form. Vampirism for unspeakable purposes. Hopsfield's right. We have to take responsibility for the things we do. The bastard stole our brains to make a weapon. Let's get him.

MITCH
Right!

They cheer and charge out. A moment later, they wander back in.

ICK
How?

They don't know.

EXT. PALOMAR OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

Chris, Mitch, Ick and Jordan drive through the gate which says: "PALOMAR OBSERVATORY. CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY."

INT. ENTRANCE OF OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

Chris, Mitch, Ick and Jordan are walking.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MITCH
Are you sure about this?

CHRIS
The guys owes me a favor. I once dated his sister. You know her? She was in all the medical journals. Coyote girl?

They walk OUT OF FRAME.

INT. OBSERVATORY - CLOSEUP - A STUDENT, GREG - NIGHT

a pimply stringbean, is at the controls that lower the telescope.

EXT. OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

The telescope is being lowered. From its position of pointing to the heavens to a 90 degree angle, then rotating to the right.

CHRIS (O.S.)
More... more... got it!

INT. OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

Chris is looking into the giant telescope.

CHRIS' POV - THROUGH TELESCOPE

He's got the Kirkland Air Force Base. It's crystal clear.

CHRIS (O.S.)
There's the base. Bring me to the right.

Greg hits the controls and we PAN TO THE RIGHT. We come across an area labeled, "RESTRICTED." Beyond it sits a KC-135 jet.

CHRIS (O.S.)
(continuing)
Stop! I see it.

We see the engineers carry Atherton's laser on board.

CHRIS (O.S.)
(continuing)
They're working on it.
(he's seen enough)
Okay.

ANGLE - CHRIS

CHRIS
(a submarine commander)
Down. Scope. Dive -- Dive.
(makes siren noises)
Let's go. Thanks, Greg.

GREG
Hey, Chris, my sister's asking bout you.

CHRIS
Yeah? She still bringing home animals in her mouth? Tell her I said...

He howls like a coyote. Chris and Mitch exit.

INT. STEAM TUNNEL

Hopsfield is leading Ick, Jordan, Mitch and Chris. They pass several enormous sacks.

ICK
What are those?

CHRIS
Hopsfield, are you really Santa Claus?

HOPSFIELD
(serious)
No. Entries in the McDonald's contest One-point-six million. I have a real good chance of winning the mother.

Hopsfield has led them to his living quarters in the steam tunnel. There's a sleeping bag on the floor. A pile of books. A hotplate. And several pillows for sitting on.

HOPSFIELD
(continuing)
Here we are.

CHRIS
You've done wonders with the place.

Hopsfield points to a phone terminal along the wall.

HOPSFIELD
This is the phone terminal for the entire school.

MITCH
Okay. We tap into Atherton's phone and find out when they're testing the laser.

CONTINUED:

CHRIS
Hopsfield, seriously, you gotta move out of here. It's disgusting.

HOPSFIELD
Well... I guess I could move upstairs with you.

CHRIS
Although this place does have potential...

INT. STEAM TUNNEL - ANOTHER ANGLE

Mitch wearing a headset. We hear ATHERTON'S PHONE RING. Mitch perks up.

ATHERTON (V.O.)
Hello.

ROSITA (V.O.)
(Spanish accent)
Dr. Atherton.

ATHERTON (V.O.)
Yes?

ROSITA (V.O.)
This is Rosita.

ATHERTON (V.O.)
I...

ROSITA (V.O.)
You remember the Public Television banquet? I served your table. You copped a feel on me.

ATHERTON (V.O.)
I... that was...

ROSITA (V.O.)
Anyway. They put my husband in jail for doping a jai alai, so I thought maybe we could get together.

INT. STEAM TUNNEL - LATER

Mitch is listening to the middle of a conversation.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANGRY VOICE (V.O.)
Listen, Atherton, everything you said on your show last week was copied right out of my book. Now either you give me credit or I'm calling a lawyer.

INT. STEAM TUNNEL - LATER

Mitch is still listening.

VOICE (V.O.)
Dr. Atherton, this is the Passion Palace. The edible underwear you ordered just came in.

INT. STEAM TUNNEL - LATER

Mitch is losing interest. The PHONE RINGS.

ATHERTON (V.O.)
Yes?

DECKER (V.O.)
Jer, General Decker.

ATHERTON (V.O.)
Yes, General.

DECKER (V.O.)
We test tomorrow at one p.m.

Mitch, excited, throws off the headset and EXITS FRAME.

Hopsfield enters, pushing a vacuum cleaner, tidying up his tunnel floor.

INT. CHRIS AND MITCH'S ROOM - MORNING

Chris, Mitch and Ick watch Jordan as she tries to interface with another computer. Each time she hits the keys the readout replies, "NEGATIVE."

CHRIS
What do you think?

Jordan fails again.

JORDAN
Glitch!

CHRIS
It's 10:30... can you patch into the base computer?

CONTINUED:

She fails again.

JORDAN
Glitch!

CHRIS
Jordan?

She fails for a third time.

JORDAN
Glitch!

CHRIS
Three glitches and you're out. We can't get through to give us on-base clearance.

JORDAN
It looked so easy in "War Games."

CHRIS
Plan two swings into action. Ick?

Ick takes two faked I.D.'s out of his pocket.

ICK
I made these up last night. Did some research -- they should work.

INSERT

Two faked I.D.'s with Mitch and Chris' pictures on them.

ANGLE

Ick hands them to Chris and Mitch.

ICK
It's the best I could do.

MITCH
What if it doesn't fool anybody?

CHRIS
They shoot us.

EXT. KIRKLAND AIR FORCE BASE - MAIN ENTRANCE - GUARD GATE - DAY

A burly MILITARY POLICEMAN checks the I.D.'s of the occupants of every car before they enter the base. The M.P. has a sour look that says, "I don't like anyone."

ANGLE - CHRIS' CAR

It's next in line.

INT. CHRIS' CAR

Chris turns to Mitch.

ANGLE

Mitch is a wreck and Chris doesn't help. He begins humming the theme from "Mission Impossible," playing the drama of the moment to the hilt.

M.P. (O.S.)
Next car!

Chris drives the car to the gate.

EXT. CHRIS' CAR

The M.P. leans into Chris' window.

M.P.
I.D.'s.

CHRIS
Sure!

He turns to Mitch.

INT. CHRIS CAR

Mitch, obviously shaking, digs his I.D. out of his pocket, and hands it to Chris.

MITCH
(softly, a plea for strength)
Chris...

Chris gives him a big, wide grin.

EXT. CHRIS' CAR

Chris hands the M.P. the I.D.'s.

QUICK CUTS

M.P. - He looks the I.D. over.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MITCH - Frightened.

CHRIS - Giving the M.P. a big grin.

M.P. - He glances at Chris and Mitch, then looks back to the I.D.

MITCH - He knows they're dead meat.

CHRIS - Still has on his big plastic grin.

M.P. - Carefully scrutinizing the I.D.'s.

MITCH - His life flashing in front of his eyes.

CHRIS - Still smiling.

M.P. - Pondering.

CHRIS - Taking the initiative.

CHRIS
Something wrong, officer?

M.P.
Aren't you guys a little young to be aircraft technicians?

CHRIS
Young? Do you know how old the Wright Brothers were when they invented mechanized flight?

M.P.
No.

CHRIS
Well, neither do I and I haven't got time to talk about it, Mr. 34179.

The M.P. is intimidated. He hands back their I.D. cards.

M.P.
Go on through.

ANGLE - RUNWAY IN FRONT OF HANGAR

The KC-135 jet sits on the runway, its sleek metallic fuselage gleaming in the sunlight. Technicians, who are wearing jumpsuits similar to the ones Mitch and Chris have on, are busy working around the plane.

Chris and Mitch ENTER FRAME and walk up to the plane. A couple of the technicians watch them curiously as they go up the stairs into the cabin.

INT. PLANE

Chris and Mitch enter. Several more technicians are inside the plane running last minute checks on the laser, which sits in the middle of the cabin. Chris crosses to the technician who is at the on-board computer. He watches him making mental notes as he programs a complicated code into the terminal. The technician turns, sensing his presence.

CHRIS
That'll work fine.

Mitch, meanwhile, checks out the telescope-like beam director, which sticks out of the laser and comes out into a turret on the top of the plane. After a beat, one of the technicians signals for the others to complete their jobs and exit. They start to file out. One of them turns back and looks at Chris, who is just standing there.

CHRIS
Be right there. Just want to clean out the ashtrays.

The technician shakes his head uncertainly and exits with the others. Finally Mitch and Chris are alone.

MITCH
Did you get a look at the code?

CHRIS
Not really.

MITCH
Great.

Chris pulls out a high frequency transmitter from his jumpsuit. It's the size of a Sony Walkman. He flips a switch and puts on a headset.

CHRIS
(into mouthpiece)
Abbott to Costello... Abbott to Costello.

INT. CHRIS AND MITCH'S ROOM

Jordan and Ick are manning the computers, running programs, etc. Jordan stops what she's doing and talks into the headpiece.

JORDAN
This is Costello. This is Costello. Go ahead, Abbott.

INT. PLANE - CHRIS AND MITCH

CHRIS
Costello, who's on first.

Mitch hits him, impatiently.

JORDAN (V.O.)
We have the target coordinates computed for trajectory adjustment.

CHRIS
Great. Shoot.

JORDAN (V.O.)
Longitude, 182.0987 southwest.
Latitude, 26.0765 east.

Chris writes this down and hands it to Mitch, who starts typing this into the terminal.

CHRIS
Got it.

Chris looks over at Mitch.

MITCH
It's not taking it.

CHRIS
Good news!

INT. KIRKLAND CONTROL TOWER - DAY

Technicians are readying the plane for take-off, checking monitors and a radar scope at a control panel. Atherton is in the rear of the room briefing a group of civilian and military brass. Amongst them is Don Carmichael. Atherton points to a drawing on a large chart.

ATHERTON
The plane will reach an altitude of thirty-five thousand feet. When it is over the target. The laser will fire for five point I-two seconds.

Decker enters.

DECKER
They're all set for the final onboard check.

ATHERTON
Fine. Right this way, gentlemen.

They all follow Atherton and Decker to the exit at the rear of the room.

INT. PLANE

Mitch is adjusting the beam director as Chris pounds away at the terminal keys. Over the headset we can hear Ick's voice:

ICK (V.O.)
Okay, now try 78666 baker.

CHRIS
That comes up... 1734 alpha.

INT. CHRIS' ROOM - CLOSEUP - ICK

He punches away at his computer.

ICK
Let me recheck it.

Hopsfield appears from nowhere and grabs the microphone.

HOPSFIELD
Follow it with a three digit series.

INT. PLANE

Chris hits the keys.

CHRIS
(to Mitch)
What time is it?

MITCH
Twelve forty-four...

CHRIS
Isn't this something? The plane takes off in 16 minutes and I don't even feel pressured.

He wipes the sweat off his brow and watches the readout on the monitor.

EXT. THE RUNWAY

Atherton, Decker, Carmichael and the others come out of the hangar and start toward the plane.

INT. PLANE

CHRIS
We need another four-digit series. Maybe 2445.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOPSFIELD (V.O.)
No. Try binaries.

CHRIS
Right...

Mitch watches the readout as Chris types.

EXT. THE PLANE

Atherton and company approach the plane.

INT. THE PLANE

CHRIS
This should be it, but it's not working.

MITCH
Replace the seven with the six.

CHRIS
What? Seven with the six.

HOPSFIELD (V.O.)
Do it!

Chris types it in.

ANGLE - THE MONITOR

The incredibly complex numbers and letters line up perfectly on the screen.

ANGLE - CHRIS AND MITCH

CHRIS
(to Mitch)
I'd like to take this time to say.
(suddenly wild)
What a guy!

INT. THE DORM ROOM

Everyone lets out an excited shout.

EXT. THE PLANE

Decker leads the way up the stairs.

INT. THE PLANE

Mitch hears the FOOTSTEPS OUTSIDE.

MITCH
(panicked)
Someone's coming.

EXT. THE PLANE

Decker opens the door and the others follow him in.

INT. PLANE

Atherton comes in and checks out the laser. He looks at various gauges, checks the power source. Mitch and Chris are nowhere to be seen. Carmichael crosses to him.

CARMICHAEL
Everything all right?

ATHERTON
Perfect.

EXT. THE PLANE

The group comes down the stairs.

TIGHTER SHOT - THE GROUP

walking in the middle of the eight military men and Decker are Mitch and Chris. Atherton is leading the group, chatting with Decker, oblivious to them. It's tense for Chris and Mitch, in the middle of the enemy. Chris seizes a chance to escape.

As they come to the hangar and start to enter, Chris grabs Mitch's arm and they start to walk away from the rest of the group. Just then, Atherton turns around and catches a momentary glimpse of them turning a corner of the building and zooming out of sight. He stops for a second, concerned.

CARMICHAEL
What is it?

ATHERTON
Nothing. Just thought I saw something.

He turns and follows the others into the hangar.

INT. CONTROL TOWER- DAY

Atherton and company watch as a flight controller clears the plane for takeoff.

EXT. BASE - GATE

Chris drives out the gate.

EXT. CHRIS' CAR

It passes by the M.P. Chris hangs his head out the window.

CHRIS
You validate? Never mind.

He drives off. The M.P. throws Chris a firm salute.

INT. CHRIS' CAR

Chris is now humming the "James Bond Theme."

EXT. RUNWAY

The KC-135 lifts off and quickly gains altitude.

INT. CONTROL TOWER

Decker turns to Atherton and Carmichael.

DECKER
We're at T minus 45.

EXT. RICKETS HALL

Hopsfield, Ick and Jordan are standing out in front of Rickets.

Just then, Chris and Mitch pull up.

CHRIS
How's our time?

JORDAN
We'll make it.

They all pile into Chris' car and drive off.

INT. CONTROL TOWER - DAY

DECKER
Switch on the on-board camera.

A technician hits a switch. A monitor pops on. Crosshairs dominate the center of the screen. The desert floor rushes by us as the jet speeds along. The target, a tank, appears in the distance.

DECKER
(continuing)
We're locked on target.

Atherton and Carmichael gleam with pleasure.

EXT. STREET NEAR CAMPUS

Dr. Meredith stands on the sidewalk, holding the gang's letter, as Chris pulls his car over to the curb and they all pile out.

CHRIS
Thanks for showing up.

DR. MEREDITH
You've made some very strong accusations about Dr. Atherton.

MITCH
They're true.

JORDAN
He's a real germ.

CHRIS
He should be fired, arrested and have his TV show put opposite the A-Team.

DR. MEREDITH
If he's used students to develop a laser weapon, I'll need proof.

CHRIS
If you wait just a second, I think we've got a little surprise for you.

MITCH
(checking his watch)
We're almost there.

INT. CONTROL TOWER

Decker is giving the countdown, while the others watch tensely.

CONTINUED:

DECKER
Seven... six... five... four...
three... two... one.

INT. THE PLANE

We see the laser COME TO LIFE. The power source ROARS with the JET ENGINES and a thick yellow beam of sparks is emitted through the beam detector.

EXT. FROM THE GROUND LOOKING UP AT THE PLANE

We can see the laser beam come roaring out into the air. Its glow is intense, like a ray of the sun has escaped from inside the plane.

INT. CONTROL TOWER - DAY

Everyone's eyes are glued to the monitor.

ANGLE - MONITOR

The target is closer, closer, and closer, but remains untouched as the jet flies over it.

ANGLE

Atherton, Carmichael, and Decker are stunned.

DECKER
(to an aide)
Radio the pilot. See if it fired.

As the aide starts talking into his transmitter, we PUSH IN on Atherton's face. He's trying not to look worried, but he is.

EXT. STREET NEAR CAMPUS

Chris, Ick, Jordan, Mitch and Dr. Meredith are looking up into the sky.

CHRIS
It's show time.

PULL OUT to reveal they are standing across the street from Atherton's prized Victorian house.

Kent is coming up the walk carrying a large gift box.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRIS
(continuing)
Kent! No!

Kent gives him the finger.

CHRIS
(continuing)
Kent, get away. There's nobody home, I swear.

Kent gives him the finger again.

We see a streak of light from the sky blast full force into Atherton's house, blowing it to smithereens.

ANGLE - THE KIDS AND DR. MEREDITH

They stare in awe.

ANGLE KENT ON THE FRONT WALK

We see him from behind. He looks fine. He turns around. He's charred and all his clothes have been burned away.

ANGLE ON MEREDITH

DR. MEREDITH
(in a daze)
I'd like to see you people in my office in an hour.

CHRIS
You got it.

The gang lets out a cheer and scrambles into the car.

EXT. CHRIS' CAR

It pulls off down the street, as we CRANE UP to include the smoldering rubble that was once Atherton's home. We see Dr. Meredith, still in a bit of shock, is now joined by a group of spectators who are trying to figure out what happened.

EXT. CAL TECH CAMPUS - DAY

Atherton is hustling across the campus, being closely pursued by dozens of reporters. They snap questions at him: "What happened to your home?"

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

"Were you forced to resign your position at Cal Tech?" "Rumor has it you are being brought up on charges by the university..." etc. Atherton ignores every question. He's one pissed-off ex-Cal Tech professor.

ANGLE - ATHERTON

Amongst all the hassle he stops. He sees someone, much to his disliking.

ANGLE

It's Chris, together with Mitch, Ick and Jordan. Chris is wearing an "I Saw Atherton's House Blow Up" T-shirt.

CHRIS
We just heard. We're darned sorry you're leaving the university a broken, ruined man. A bunch of us chipped in and we didn't buy you anything. But we did sift through the remains of your beautiful house and salvaged your portable television.

Mitch holds up a gnarled, melted, smoking television.

CHRIS
(continuing)
It's going to need a little work. Probably be in the shop a few days. Was it a cable ready?

ATHERTON
If I ever find out you had anything to do with this...

Atherton gives him a hard look and starts to walk away. Chris stops him.

CHRIS
Just so you know, Pacific Electronic Instruments has hired me. I'm sure you must be as thrilled as I am.

ATHERTON
Buzz off.

He walks away. The reporters stay on Atherton's heels. Atherton hustles to his car and drives off.

CHRIS
Regards to Rosita.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They all start to walk away.

MITCH
You're taking the PEI job?

CHRIS
Yeah, why not?

JORDAN
(half-kidding)
Ah, you're just like Kent. After the big bucks.

CHRIS
No. Well, yeah, but not just. I figured it out. Why do I have to choose between being a nerd or a clown?

ICK
You're gonna be both?

CHRIS
(annoyed)
What's that?

He points to Ick's shirt.

ICK
What?

Ick looks down. Chris runs his finger up Ick's face.

CHRIS
160 I.Q. and he falls for that.

MITCH
You were saying.

CHRIS
Yeah. I mean we're smart. That's nothing to be ashamed of. Look, we've got a gift. I don't want to let that run my life. On the other hand, I don't want to waste it either. You can do good work at a place like PEI. I mean a job like that is whatever you make of it. And I don't think we should leave the field to guys like Kent. Who's fine incidentally. He was a little burned, but his doctor covered him with runway foam.

Suddenly a HORN BLOWS O.S. They look toward the sound.

HOPSFIELD(o.s.)
I won!

ANGLE - HOPSFIELD

He's in the driver's seat of a new Winnebago.

HOPSFIELD
I won every prize.

We WIDEN to reveal that the Winnebago is towing a new Mercedes which is pulling a boat trailer on top of which is a 30-foot sailboat. Inside the sailboat are TV's, stereo, video tape recorder, plus lots of other goodies. On top of the Winnebago are two motorcycles and a small dune buggy.

HOPSFIELD
I had to win. I sent in three million entries. How am I going to get this all down the steam tunnel?

CHRIS
Here's an idea. I don't have to report to PEI until next month. Summer's coming... you guys don't have school... why don't we all pile into the van and have a few laughs on our nation's highways and biways.

MITCH
Yeah.

JORDAN
Love it!

HOPSFIELD
Okay.

ICK
Let's go!

They pile into the van. Mitch stops Chris.

MITCH
I'm going to miss you next year.

CHRIS
Ah, don't be silly. I'll visit, we'll call each other, swap recipes. It'll be fine.

He puts his arm around Mitch and they enter the van.

INT. VAN

Hopsfield is behind the wheel. Next to him is Sherry Nugill.

Chris and Mitch are both shocked to see her.

CHRIS
You!

MITCH
You!

CHRIS
(to Mitch)
You?

MITCH
No. You?

CHRIS
Yeah.

HOPSFIELD
This is Sherry Nugill. She's been looking for me for five years. If only I'd known, I never would've have lived in that stinking tunnel.

SHERRY
(sincere)
I think this time it's love.

HOPSFIELD
Where are we going?

CONTINUED:

CHRIS
What's the difference. Hey, wait a minute. Hopsfield, can you drive this thing?

HOPSFIELD
Is it anything like a car?

CHRIS
Not much.

HOPSFIELD
Good, 'cause I can't drive a car.

CHRIS
(settling)
You didn't win bandages, did you?

EXT. CAMPUS

The Winnebago passes the Miliken statue. For the first time we see it is untouched. After a beat that changes when a meringue pie hurled from O.S. splatters all over the statue's face.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF RICKETS

CAMERA CRANES UP as the Winnebago rolls past the campus entrance and out onto the open road.

FADE OUT.

THE END